



**A University of Sussex DPhil thesis**

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

The impacts of quality assurance processes on academics in North Cyprus:  
Perspectives, experiences and professional practices

Figen Arkın

A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

University of Sussex  
2012

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the perspectives of academics on the impacts of quality assurance (QA) processes on their professional practices in a higher education institution in North Cyprus, the European University of Lefke (EUL). After considering how QA might be conceptualized, it describes QA development in this context, before exploring how QA was understood and experienced by a range of different EUL academics.

In keeping with a phenomenological approach, the study adopted a qualitative research design. Building on an assumption that social processes reveal the perspectives, thoughts and realities of individuals in context, it examined the social realities of QA from the academics' perspectives. The epistemological and ontological positioning of the study, therefore, followed a social constructivist and interpretive approach in order to explore the construction of the social processes associated with QA in my research context. Research methods involved documentary analysis of selected institutional texts and semi-structured interviews with 18 academics in different subject areas and of different seniority. Through these, the thesis aims to give voice to academics and to present their situated understandings of quality assurance and its impacts on their professional practices.

My findings indicate that QA was viewed positively by many academics, who associated it with 'quality' in both academic and administrative practices in higher education. They also understood it as being characterised by standards, transparency and quality in teaching and learning. The study further revealed that achieving quality in teaching and learning was strongly associated with aspects such as adequate provision of technological resources and facilities. The thesis also suggested that academics valued QA as a means of supporting the development of particular qualities in students, such as educating them as professionals, and for their own professional development.

Regardless of the variety of meaning that can be attached to the concept of quality and QA, ultimately it was the academics who held individual motivations and wished to have quality in their professional practices, mainly in teaching and learning, although also through the

interaction of teaching and research. They also attached significance to research as part of their understanding of quality HE.

However, the findings also demonstrate that when implemented, QA processes do not operate in a straightforward way. The empirical data demonstrated that there appeared to be a wide gap between what academics would have liked QA processes to achieve and what they thought it had accomplished. My study suggested that the implementation of the QA initiatives at institutional level has been challenged by a number of weaknesses in implementation due to the absence of institutional text(s) on principles and procedures as well as a lack of procedural orientation on how QA should be carried out. The evidence in my research suggested that academics were not satisfied with the process, partly because they had strong convictions about what quality HE provision might involve, but also because they desired an institutional environment which allowed them more participation in the decision-making process.

An important conclusion from this research is the evident difficulties in implementation of QA processes in this context are mainly due to the lack of involvement, participation and cooperation between academic staff and university management. The findings suggest that the key issues which were important for these academics were more communication, more participation that was responsive to academics' views, and the desire to have such an institutional environment. Instead of this, QA development in this institutional context had resulted in different and individualised QA practices. In this thesis I argue therefore for the need to broaden the communication and cooperation between the academics and the authorities in the conception, implementation and evaluation of change.

## **Declaration and word length**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted either in the same or different from, to this or any other university for a degree. I also declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

The word count (inclusive of tables, charts and graphs, and references and exclusive of appendixes) is 47,932.

## **Dedication**

I want to dedicate this thesis to my family, supervisors and participants of this study.  
Without them I would not have been able to complete this work.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my supervisors Professor Louise Morley and Dr Máiréad Dunne. I would like to thank Louise for her advice and encouragement throughout the designing, researching and writing up of this thesis. Unfortunately for unforeseen reasons Prof. Louise Morley is unable to continue as my supervisor. Then Dr. Barbara Crossouard has been appointed as my supervisor. I am grateful to her for her invaluable guidance, sustained support and intellectual engagement with my work is incomparable. Although we lived and worked at different countries miles and miles away Barbara was always available to and excited to discuss and guide me on my research. I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Crossouard for her invaluable and genuine support and guidance through this year of the completion of this work.

I am also grateful and would like to thank my colleagues who participated in this study. I would like to thank them for their time, interest in my study, promptness and willingness to be interviewed and permission to use their time, knowledge, experience. All of them freely gave up their time to talk to me and I acknowledge that they are the key contributors to this study.

I would like to thank Professor Hasan Ali Bıçak the Chief of Higher Education and Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council of North Cyprus who has provided me statistical data and information on quality assurance issues in North Cyprus. Finally, I would like to thank to everyone who had been around me during this challenging research process, whoever supports me academically and morally.

## List of Abbreviations

ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
CAS	Critical Analytical Study
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EMU	Eastern Mediterranean University
ENQA	European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EUL	European University of Lefke
FAE	Faculty of Architecture and Engineering
FAS	Faculty of Arts and Sciences
FAST	Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Technologies
FCS	Faculty of Communication Sciences
FEAS	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ISO	International Standardization Organization
KE	Knowledge Economy
MÜDEK	MühendislikDeğerlendirmeKurulu
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
PEC	Pakistan Engineering Council
QA	Quality Assurance
TQM	Total Quality Management
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
YÖDAK	Higher Education and Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council of North Cyprus
YÖK	Higher Education Council Turkey



## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Declaration and word length .....	iv
Dedication .....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
List of Abbreviations .....	vii
Table of Contents.....	viii
Table of Figures .....	xiii
Tables .....	xiii
Chapter 1: Research rationale, research context, research aims and questions, and conceptual framework.....	1
1.1. Introduction: The increasing importance of quality assurance in higher education ...	1
1.2. Research Rationales .....	4
1.2.1. Motivation for this research and my own professional development.....	4
1.3. Context of the study .....	7
1.3.1. Governance of higher education in North Cyprus.....	8
1.4. Research aims and questions .....	9
1.5. Conceptual and theoretical framework of this study.....	11
1.5.1. Benchmarking and standardisation.....	11
1.5.2. Students as consumers .....	13
1.5.3. Professional development .....	14
1.5.4. Learning organisations.....	15
1.5.5. Quality assurance as accountability.....	16
1.6. Summary of this chapter and thesis structure .....	19

Chapter 2: Research methodology and research design.....	22
2.1. Introduction.....	22
2.2. Ontological and epistemological positioning .....	22
2.2.1. Social constructivist framework and interpretivism.....	22
2.3. Qualitative inquiry .....	24
2.4. Phenomenology.....	25
2.5. Research methods.....	27
2.5.1. Semi-structured interviews .....	27
2.5.2. Policy and documentary analysis .....	28
2.6. Research management and conduct of the research.....	31
2.6.1. The interview focus .....	31
2.6.2. Instrument design and research pilot .....	31
2.6.3. The execution of the study: access, sampling and participants.....	32
2.6.4. Conduct of the interviews .....	35
2.7. Ethical issues and engaging my self-identity in the research process.....	37
2.7.1. Ethical procedures and access to participants .....	38
2.7.2. Researcher as insider and ethical issues .....	39
2.7.3. Values, neutrality and objectivity of the research .....	42
2.8. Data analysis processes .....	44
2.8.1. Reflexivity in social constructivism .....	44
2.8.2. Adopting phenomenology in data analysis and presentation.....	46
2.9. Further methodological reflections on interview process .....	47
2.9.1. Issues of ‘bias’ and researcher reflexivity in the interview processes.....	47
2.9.2. Issues of integrity and reflexivity .....	49
2.9.3. Issues of ‘generalisability’ .....	51

2.9.4. Limitations .....	52
2.10. Summary .....	53
Chapter 3: Quality assurance: Wider and local policy contexts.....	55
3.1. Introduction.....	55
3.2. The knowledge economy, massification, and globalisation of higher education .....	55
3.3. Impact of the Bologna Process and quality assurance .....	58
3.4. Transferability and harmonization of QA: the experience of Turkish HE .....	60
3.5. Quality assurance in North Cyprus .....	65
3.5.1. The impact of historical and political developments in HE in North Cyprus ....	65
3.5.2. The impact of the Bologna process on the development of national QA .....	67
3.6. Implementing QA at EUL .....	70
3.6.1. Quality assurance processes and related documentation in EUL.....	72
3.6.2. Implementation of QA at EUL.....	73
3.6.3. Analysis of Faculty Texts: Programme mission and vision.....	74
3.6.4. Faculty Texts: Curriculum design objectives and organization .....	74
3.6.5. Faculty Texts: Institutional facilities and support .....	75
3.6.6. Faculty Texts: Laboratories and computing facilities .....	76
3.6.7. Faculty Texts: Research development and innovation .....	76
3.7. Potential implementation gap in QA processes in the EUL .....	77
Chapter 4: Academics views and understandings of QA in EUL .....	79
4.1. Overview .....	79
4.2. Quality assurance process and practice: standards and transparency in teaching and learning.....	80
4.3. Institutional facilities and resources .....	82
4.4. Quality HE provision: educating students as professionals.....	83

4.5. Research is key to achieving quality in HE provision.....	87
4.6. Summary.....	89
Chapter 5: Implementation of QA in EUL: institutional structuring and practices.....	91
5.1. Overview .....	91
5.2. Lack of institutional text: variety in QA practices .....	91
5.3. QA practices: lack of resources and facilities.....	95
5.4. Quality in teaching and learning: Teaching approaches and quality graduates.....	97
5.5. QA bureaucracy and paper work .....	99
5.6. Time allocation and workload: lack of research .....	101
5.7. Lack of communication and cooperation: individual practices .....	105
5.8. Summary.....	115
Chapter 6: Conclusions, Reflections and Recommendations.....	117
6.1. Introduction.....	117
6.2. Limitations of the research .....	117
6.3. Answering the research questions.....	118
6.4. My journey.....	125
6.5. Contribution to knowledge and the argument of my thesis.....	125
6.6. Recommendations for the EUL .....	127
6.7. Implications of QA processes in HE .....	129
6.8. Reflections and implications for future research .....	132
References .....	134
Appendix I: Faculties and Departments in European University of Lefke .....	142
Appendix II: Original interview schedule .....	143
Appendix III: Interview schedule after piloting .....	144
Appendix IV: International QA Agencies in North Cyprus .....	145

Appendix V: Quality Assurance followed in FAE .....	146
Appendix VI: Quality Assurance Evaluations and Proposals .....	152

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: Total number of students in the five faculties of the European University of Lefke .....	7
Figure 2: Increase in the number of the students according to the years .....	65
Figure 3: The nationality of higher education students in North Cyprus from 2005. ....	66
Figure 4: The total number of students enrolled at higher education institutions in North Cyprus, 2005–2010.....	67
Figure 5: QA framework at the organisational level .....	71

## Tables

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants .....	34
Table 2: Disciplinary Location of Participants.....	34

## **Chapter 1: Research rationale, research context, research aims and questions, and conceptual framework.**

### **1.1. Introduction: The increasing importance of quality assurance in higher education**

The development and implementation of quality assurance [QA] policies in higher education [HE] has become a central concern of supra-national bodies, as well as of higher education institutions [HEIs] across multiple national contexts, and particularly in the UK and Australia. These developments signify new dimensions in our understanding of quality. They also raise concerns over how QA shapes our practices, and thus require that we delve more deeply into the political and economic drivers behind such shifts.

As is discussed in greater detail in Section (1.5), a review of the literature relevant to the development of QA in HE underscores the complexity of the concept and its influence. The literature suggests a relationship between QA and the globalisation and internationalisation of HE; indeed, these have been seen as the main drivers for the introduction of QA in a HE context (Harvey, 2004; Knight, 2001; van der Wende&Westerheijden, 2001). The introduction of QA into the HE sector, as Morley (2003a) states, has been justified by the expansion of HE across national boundaries. This has in turn led to increased demand for more rigorous and robust QA measures. In the education policy arena, QA has been introduced as a mechanism which can be understood as a transparent benchmarking process, and as a process ensuring common standards across different HE contexts (Seto& Wells, 2007). QA is thus assumed to operate with a more normative and static conceptualisation of HE processes, defined by preconceived criteria. The ostensible goals of QA may be accountability and transparency, to make operations more visible and efficient, and are usually intended to be implemented at the national level. Its processes and consequences have been shown to be varied, complex, and contested (Vidovich& Porter, 1999). Against this complex and contested background (Morley, 2001a; 2003a), there are

important factors to be considered in evaluating different national contexts. Dale (1999; 2005) points to dramatic differences in the level of globalisation of QA and its transfer across nations. The manner in which QA is implemented may depend to a considerable extent on nation-specific contextual structures.

The underlying assumption of the homogenisation of the learning process depends entirely on standardisation, uniformity and homogeneity of performance in order to serve the mechanisms of transparency, audits and benchmarking (Ozga, 2000). Quality assurance is a generic term within HE, however, which contributes to a multitude of potential interpretations; put simply, it is not possible to use one definition to cover all circumstances, and what counts as ‘quality’ in any particular dimension—such as the acquisition of a specific skill, or the achievement of a specific learning outcome—assumes meaning in context-dependent ways (Morley, 2003a; Sadler, 2009a). Morse (2006) has pointed to a noticeable implementation gap affecting the transportability of skills across national borders. She argues that the differences between nations and regions make the international standardisation of learning goals impracticable. In addition to the significance of globalisation, a review of the associated literature (see below) reveals additional complexities; QA processes may result in unexpected consequences and variations in situated practices. As such, the word ‘standards’ is employed in a variety of ways across Europe, ranging from statements of narrowly defined regulatory requirements to more generalized descriptions of good practice (Kohler, 2009).

Despite the ways in which QA has become associated with standardisation and accountability in the HE sector, particularly in the UK (Brown, 2000; Hobday, 2000; Newton, 2000), a range of research findings conducted from UK-centric perspective suggest the complexities associated with the impact of QA in and on HE (Morley, 2001a; 2003a; Newton, 2000; 2002; Henkel, 2007). Quality assurance policies may not achieve their presumed impact in improving teaching and learning outcomes (Harvey, 2010; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Knight & Trowler, 2000; McInnis 2000; Morley, 2003a; Yorke, 2000). These researchers have also drawn attention to the actual QA practices and how these QA systems and their attendant bureaucracies and managerial propositions can be improved



upon, as opposed to investigating solely how QA might produce improvements in teaching and learning outcomes.

These observations regarding the implementation of QA in HE highlight the fact that facilitating and guiding change in desired directions is highly dependent on the specific context, and on the people engaged in these local contexts. Rather than dogmatically observed standardised practices, the conjuncture of QA processes with the rise of economic and political concerns over the exchange and use values of HE have been argued to produce new organisational cultures and professional priorities (Morley, 2001a; 2003a). At the level of professional practice, academics can be seen to strive to meet the expectations of proposed QA processes (Anderson, 2006; Newton, 2000; 2002). The engagement of academics with QA processes, however, affects their feelings, levels of commitment and loyalty, as well as their desire for, or resistance to, their professional practices in core activities (Anderson, 2006; Morley, 2003a; Watty, 2002; 2003).

The extant literature addressing QA suggests a greater variety in practices than would be expected were the process simply a matter of the dogmatic implementation of externally-defined, preconceived criteria and normative standards. As will be reviewed below, in the Conceptual Framework (see section 1.5), QA is therefore seen as a multi-faceted concept which can be understood differently from different epistemological positions.

Following these introductory insights into the rising importance of QA in HE and its complexities relative to that venue, the rest of this chapter is divided into five further sections. Section (1.2) describes the research rationales in relation to my research context and the setting of the study. Section (1.3) explains the contextual background of the research. Section (1.4) describes the research aims and questions. Section (1.5) outlines the conceptual framework used to structure this research. Lastly, section (1.6) summarises this chapter and lays out the structure of this thesis.

## 1.2. Research Rationales

### 1.2.1. Motivation for this research and my own professional development

During my work toward the degree of EdD in the Department of Education of the University of Sussex, I completed several assignments related to QA within the UK HE sector. In the course of doing so, I discovered how politically sensitive QA could be, and how complex it is to implement effective measures properly and efficiently. The intellectual inspiration for this study comes from Professor Louise Morley, my advisor, and the impact and impression that she and her book, *Quality and Power in Higher Education* (Morley, 2003a), have had on me. The third assignment I completed in the EdD programme, the critical analytical study [CAS], introduced me to QA in a HE context. Discussions held as a part of that CAS highlighted the effects and influences of QA, as well as the complexity of QA when situated within the wider context of HE. These complexities also included problems arising from efforts to transfer specific QA measures across different national contexts (see sections 3.2 and 3.4).

An analysis of the literature on QA processes (section 3.2) indicates the growing importance attached to QA across many HE contexts. I therefore decided to conduct research into QA within the HE context with which I am most familiar, that of North Cyprus. This study therefore builds on interests developed in the early stages of my study towards the degree of EdD, with the aim of investigating QA development in a particular HE context in as much depth as possible.

This research aims to contribute to the accumulated knowledge on the topic in multiple ways. First, there is an urgent need to introduce QA processes to North Cyprus HE, and the field of study is of immediate relevance to the context. Moreover, my review of the QA literature and professional knowledge amassed in the course of my studies both suggest a dearth of existing research into QA in the selected HE context, whether at an institutional or national level, as well as a lack of understanding as to how this context might connect with, relate to or differ from wider international contexts. This lack of research was a strong

motivator in selecting this as the research topic to be presented in one of the HE institutions in North Cyprus.

A second motive comes from observations made and experiences gained while observing the introduction of QA measures, and the questions these observations raised regarding how these efforts might be related to economic motives pursued in the HE sector in North Cyprus. I will discuss an additional critical issue which I experienced as an HE manager, which makes the development and implementation of QA in this context of particular interest (see sections 3.6 and 3.7). It is clear that QA is an issue meriting in-depth exploration, particularly considering the economic and political motives in my own professional location and national context.

In my 17 years of academic career in the European University of Lefke in North Cyprus (EUL), I have experienced a number of radical changes in the HE sector. These have included the urgent introduction of QA in HE, as well as massification, with a considerable increase in the number of students enrolled at HEIs in North Cyprus. Rapid and diverse growth in North Cyprus HEIs has resulted in constraints being placed on QA processes. The introduction of QA into the HE sector has not been smooth, whether as policy or process; the rise of a related discourse has been accompanied by a diversity of practices for various political and economic reasons, discussed more fully in Chapter 3. This research therefore explores the definition and recognition of the QA practices already implemented, and critically examines how academics relate to and are affected by QA processes in their professional practice at EUL. It is my personal observation that there are contextual factors, which can be overlooked at the decision-making level, which have directly and indirectly affected the implementation and functioning of QA processes, at both the national and organisational levels.

The EUL was selected for its institutional focus on QA processes and its continuing commitment to the implementation of QA measures. My primary motivation is the exploration of the reflective influences of QA at the organizational level, with particular emphasis given to the effect of QA policies on the professional practices of academics. A

synthetic analysis of the various texts (see section 3.6.3) conceptualises QA in this context, analysing representations and assumptions affecting and resulting from the implementation and practice of QA at EUL. I also hope to explain some of the complexities, and the diversity of QA processes, in order to explore how these social processes and practices were constructed. My research interest and position as a researcher have led me to suspect that, in an educational setting, the professional knowledge of participants is an important factor influencing the implementation and eventual outcomes of QA practices.

In my academic and administrative career, I have become increasingly aware of the influences of QA processes. The propositions and practices of QA need to be laid out clearly, in order to properly consider their implications for, and impacts on, HE. I aim to look broadly at shifts in organisational philosophies and approaches, and the implications of such shifts on conceptualising and addressing QA frameworks in North Cyprus HEIs. This study is also pioneering, in that it focuses attention on QA processes from the perspective of academics. I was determined to develop an approach that would serve to extend understanding of QA processes in HE, both theoretically and methodologically, while leveraging my existing research skills and professional knowledge and experiences as both an academic and an administrator. It is with these considerations in mind that my own workplace, the EUL, was selected as the research setting for this thesis. The EUL is one of the HE institutions in North Cyprus. In addition to producing new knowledge pertaining to an under-studied context, it is hoped that the research presented here will shed light on critical issues regarding efforts to improve QA processes and practices, first and foremost in regards to the EUL, but also pertaining to other HEIs in North Cyprus.

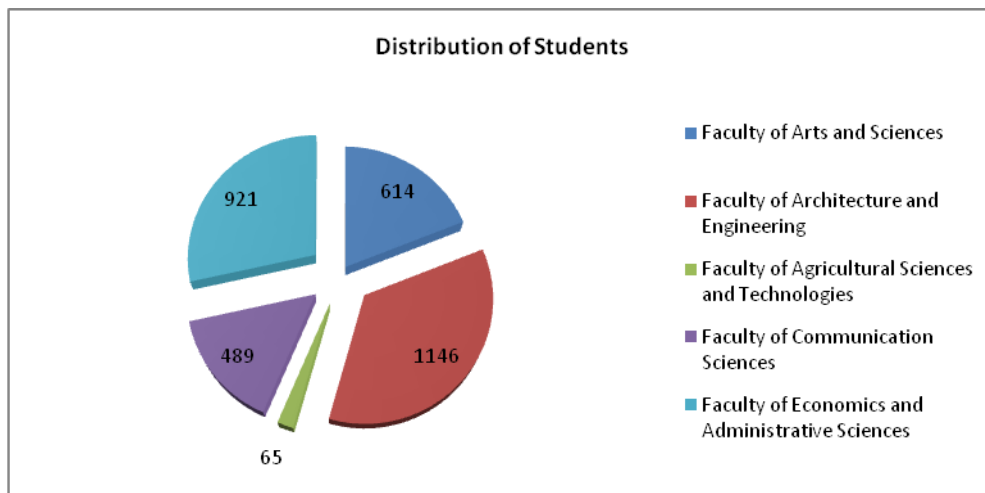
My personal motivation for this research is largely derived from my experiences with QA processes while at EUL, the implementation of which was often challenging. My primary concern as an academic is that academics hold great uncertainty regarding the procedures and impacts of QA, despite it having helped to implement standards and control over, and transparency into academic issues. QA processes seem to have maintained distinct differences in the separate academic and professional contexts to which they have been applied. The EUL's implementation of QA practices was not handled smoothly or in a non-

contentious manner, creating and contributing to precarious insecurities on the part of the affected academics.

### 1.3. Context of the study

The EUL was originally a franchise of the University of Brighton, founded in 1989 as a non-profit, state-run university. In 2008, when this study was initiated, the EUL hosted five faculties: Architecture and Engineering [FAE], Economics and Administration [FEAS], Arts and Sciences [FAS], Communication Sciences [FCS], and Agricultural Sciences and Technologies [FAST]. There were twenty departments spread across these five faculties (see Appendix I), with each faculty containing between three and six subject-specific departments. Figure 1 presents the total number of students in each of the five faculties in the 2008 academic year.

**Figure 1: Total number of students in the five faculties of the European University of Lefke**



Source: The European University of Lefke, 2008.

### **1.3.1. Governance of higher education in North Cyprus**

Each HEI operating in North Cyprus is subject to both the Higher Education Council (YÖK), a body created in Turkey in 1982, and the Higher Education and Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council of North Cyprus (YÖDAK), constituted in 2005 as an independent body in North Cyprus. At the national level, both YÖK and YÖDAK share responsibility for, and oversight of, HE in North Cyprus.

In North Cyprus, HEIs are self-regulated. Apart from accreditation and recruitment, HEIs have a high level of autonomy with regard to internal governance and institutional decisions. Public universities are partly dependent on government funding for physical developments, for instance for faculty buildings, laboratories, and other resources. Funding is allocated according to and dependent on projects in relation to the number of students affected and material need, but is not related to the internal governing initiative of economic dependence of universities. Private universities, on the other hand, have Boards of Trustees, and control of the decision-making process is shared between the Executive Board and the Rector of the University. The main revenue streams of HEIs are derived from students' fees (Act 65, Article 38).

The introduction of QA into North Cyprus HE can be seen to carry with it intersecting political, economic, and social dimensions. At a national level, the integration of accreditation frameworks with the Bologna Process has been promoted, accentuating the need for QA (see section 3.5.2). This alignment with a supra-national process carries clearly political dimensions. Both socially and economically, the rationale for this integration is linked to interest and efforts to broaden participation (see section 3.5.1). Nevertheless, efforts to introduce QA processes have proven challenging, largely because such efforts have not been linked to or supported by any national-level policy. This gives outsized influence to the internal dynamics of each institution, at each of the different levels affected by the proposed processes. The manner in which QA invades internal decision-making processes and affects professional practices in such a context is the primary focus of this study.

The social and political reasoning supporting the introduction of QA in North Cyprus has some limitations at a national level (see section 3.5). As stated, the introduction of QA as a policy has not been adopted at the national level, and so understanding the background and recent developments of the field in North Cyprus has proven challenging. Toward this end, this study will define some of the ways in which QA processes have developed and how they are valued in HE provision. More importantly, this research explores the points of view held by academics, and their experiences with QA processes in both HE provision and professional practice.

#### **1.4. Research aims and questions**

This research was undertaken to identify the views of academics in relation to the QA processes put in place at EUL. The data presented here is the result of semi-structured interviews with 18 academics. The main research question addressed by the thesis is:

*From the perspective of academics engaged at an HEI in North Cyprus, how does the development of quality assurance processes impact professional practices?*

This study has sought to achieve and disseminate a better understanding of the views and experiences academics have relative to the QA processes implemented at EUL. The goal was the exploration of their understanding of the changes, and of whether and how the QA processes impacted their professional practices. These topics were investigated through the following three subsidiary questions:

1. What is the background of QA development, and how has QA been developed in the North Cyprus HE context?
2. How do academics at the European University of Lefke understand and value QA in achieving quality HE provision?
3. What are the issues confronting academics at the European University of Lefke in implementing QA processes?

The concepts of quality and of quality assurance are widely used in HE. However, they are complex, and their meanings are contested. As discussed in more detail in section (1.5), quality assurance can be conceptualised differently in different educational contexts. As can be seen in the Conceptual Framework, both quality and QA have acquired symbolic values, which are used to systematise teaching and learning and professional practices.

As discussed in Chapter 1, quality is conceptualised to achieve transparency and to standardise teaching and learning and professional practices in HE. This ethos of standardisation and transparency in HE is to systematise and regulate HE within certain norms and standards (see section 1.5). On the other hand, quality assurance can be defined as processes and structures involving the systematic monitoring of the quality services provided in order to maintain and improve standards in HE.

However, as discussed in various sections (see section 1.5.1), concepts like quality and quality assurance can not be made transparent or standard because of their contested and slippery characteristics. However, quality can mean different things to people, in different circumstances and contexts, and this difference in meaning reflects a difference in perceptions and measurement of quality. The potential variations and complexity in understanding such concepts are characterised by/within different educational contexts. These are discussed more fully in Chapter 3 with relevant literature exploring such complexities of the different potential understandings of quality and QA.

In undertaking this research, I explore those aspects which are neglected, and that must be considered in conjunction with the development of QA processes in North Cyprus HE. The first research question deals directly with the development of QA in North Cyprus HE. This question is explored in-depth in Chapter 3. The introduction of QA to North Cyprus is discussed, along with its subsequent development. The discussion section of this chapter develops an argument centred on the effects of the absence of a national-level QA policy.

The second question focuses on the perspectives and theoretical level of understanding of the academics as it pertains to QA and quality HE provision. The question was meant to



focus on how academics understood the rationale for the proposed policy changes, and the implications of their relative understanding for the introduction of specific institutional changes in HE. This question is explored in-depth in Chapter 4. In the following section (1.5), I provide a conceptual framework suggesting the complexity of the different potential understandings of QA.

The third research question defines the issues confronting academics at EUL in their implementation of QA, and explores how these can best be addressed. The absence of any national QA-related policy has been influential at several levels, including the institutional level. There has been scholarly attention devoted to the question of how QA invades interior decision-making processes and professional practices at an institutional level, and this is investigated in Chapter 5.

## **1.5. Conceptual and theoretical framework of this study**

At a basic level, QA processes can be defined as involving the systematic monitoring of the quality of services provided in order to maintain and improve standards in a given context; in the case of this thesis, that context is HE. The literature review shows, however, that the concept can be understood in different ways, and that such understandings are informed by different epistemological and theoretical perspectives. This section outlines some such differences and theoretical perspectives. It deals in turn with QA when conceptualised as a question of benchmarking and standardisation, a response to the re-conceptualisation of the student as consumer model, or as a contribution to professional development, organizational learning, or QA as a form of accountability. The following sections address each aspect in order to provide a framework for later analysis of the data collected from semi-structured interviews.

### **1.5.1. Benchmarking and standardisation**

QA can be conceptualised as involving standardisation and transparency, based on the assumption that benchmarking and the ensuring of standards are benign and straightforward

efforts. For some, however, this reveals a lack of understanding regarding what constitutes a ‘standard’, and more importantly, assumes that benchmarking can be done in a transparent way across different contexts; it can thus be seen as being epistemologically naïve (Morley, 2003a; Newton, 2007). Arguments in the existing literature point to ways in which QA processes might create tension within and between the policy-making process and the respective spheres of interpretation governing what constitutes a desirable outcome. From a sociological perspective, Morley (2003a) argues that QA policy and processes lack sociological imagination, and are largely based on positivistic epistemology.

According to Morley (2003a), assumptions about the possibility of creating standardisation in HE might carry with them unexpected consequences, or might create contradictory and conflicting discourses. She argues that there are theoretical and ideological tensions inherent to attempts toward standardisation through the use of descriptors, arguing that learning incorporates multi, inter and trans-disciplinary approaches. Morley also argues that following rigid disciplinary demarcations can have a negative influence on learning processes, and may cause the more experiential aspects of HE to fragment (Morley, 2003a). Newton (2002; 2007) also highlights the inherent tensions between the different epistemological assumptions of academic disciplines, noting that they thereby produce tensions between institutions and academics perspectives of QA processes. It can be argued that epistemological issues might be oversimplified or rendered unproblematic in QA processes, even though they can be influential in teaching and learning.

Sadler (2009b) has criticized the influence the Bologna Process has had on Australian HE. His critique of a ‘Bolognaise of the curriculum’ questions how ‘academic standards’ can be made explicit and how teaching and academic achievements can be made transparent and standard, arguing that these issues are in flux (Sadler, 2009b:3). He suggests implementing a strong emphasis on developing a set of ‘processes’, applicable both nationally and internationally, before noting there is as ‘yet a surprising lack of clarity about the precise nature of the end to be achieved’ (Sadler, 2009b:4). Sadler (2009b) further suggests that it is impossible and unnecessary to standardise teaching and learning at either the international or national level.

Sadler (2005) has offered deeper criticism of the notion of ‘standards’, as when he argued that following a criteria-based approach reflects an interest in educational effectiveness, but found that the concepts of ‘criteria’ and ‘standards’ were often confused. According to the arguments he has presented, stated policies are like external prescriptions or guidance, which may cut across the teacher’s role as an academic professional (Sadler, 2005). Sadler (2009a) has also indicated that the standardisation of learning outcomes may be assumed across different contexts, but for him it is not possible to ignore the multiplicity of potential learning discourses and the effect of creativity.

Sadler (2009a) also highlights the tacit nature of a ‘standard’, and how language itself cannot make a standard ‘transparent’ in teaching and learning activities. Assuming QA processes result in transparency and comparability ignores the multiple and context-dependent meanings associated with academic practices. My research builds on the arguments scrutinising the idea that assumptions—particularly those surrounding concepts such as ‘standards’ and ‘transparency’—may vary, and may gain situated meanings in the minds of participants in any specific educational context (see section 1.5.3). I explore these potential variations in the understanding of such concepts, and also explore the background of why and how such concepts can be understood differently within different contexts.

### **1.5.2. Students as consumers**

Striving for standardisation and transparency for accountability purposes in HE has increased the importance of consumerist perspectives. This is reflected in the need for consumer information; the rise of the consumer society; and, the construct of education as a service to be provided to students, as consumers (Morley, 2003a). According to such a view, QA is conceptualised as codifying and systematising student satisfaction, and is understood to be soliciting student feedback in order to further improve the provision of services (Morley, 2001b; Morley, 2003a). According to Morley (2003a), interpreting student-teacher interactions in the same light as one would consumer-service deliverer interactions has imbued the role of teacher with a new meaning. The idea of ‘consumerism’ is reaffirmed in the student-teacher relationships embedded in the market model of

education. From a teacher's point of view, however, QA processes—which were expected to focus on students' learning experiences—have actually downgraded the teacher's professional role, from knowledge provider to service provider, resulting in increased labour intensity and reduced time during which they are available to students (Morley, 2003a). For this reason, the current study extends the notion of codifying teaching and learning under the scheme of QA processes in HE to a specific context—EUL. Doing so also helps to account for other influences, such as massification, student-teacher relationships, and their influences on teaching and learning approaches in HE.

### **1.5.3. Professional development**

Quality assurance in HE can be conceptualised as contributing to professional development (Morley 2003a). Research into the assumption that QA relates to professional development has, however, identified some negative influences in practice. In Britain, for example, highly structured QA interventions have caused fatigue, a result of preparing for inspection. Where identified, this has inevitably resulted in reduced teaching effectiveness (Morley, 2003a). In HE, QA processes seem to create more pressure on academics, with increased working hours and teaching workloads. Morley (2003a) has argued that efforts to conceptualise QA in HE have led to the preferences of HEIs dominating in such a way that learning and teaching are seen as being of secondary importance as compared to research incentives. Morley (2003a:100) described how HE professionals can now be expected to fill a range of roles, such as 'researcher', 'administrator', 'teacher' and 'entrepreneur'. In her UK-centric study, Morley (2003a) noted how teaching and learning, pedagogical complexities, and diversity were over-simplified, and that QA incentives create pressure toward increased research output. The main assumption is that QA schemes operate in a social and policy context in which certain issues have become dominant and are likely to place considerable pressure on academics by pulling them between the logic of managerial control—for instance, through QA processes focused on accountability and the promotion of research—and the conventions of academic issues prevalent in everyday activities, such as teaching and learning (Morley, 2003a; Morley & Rassool, 2000; Newton, 2000; 2002). Robertson (2005) has argued that the codified knowledge around teaching and learning has

led teachers to work in individualized settings, and that such knowledge is thus personal rather than collective. Robertson (2005:159) has also argued that:

[As] a result, teachers have resisted the codification of their pedagogical knowledge – as a form of de-skilling and proletarianisation, though it should be pointed out that in the UK, teachers’ pedagogical autonomy has been significantly eroded with the implementation of strict evaluation criteria for a curriculum.

Robertson (2005) also draws attention to the idea of social capital, and the idea that social processes involve interaction and mutual sharing and learning from one another. This latter point is an important feature of professional development. Robertson’s analysis suggests these interactions and exchanges of knowledge and best practices have produced individualised teaching, which perpetuates idiosyncratic knowledge by creating few opportunities for engagement with colleagues regarding innovative and effective teaching methods.

Eraut (2000; 2004) has noted that QA processes operate in a normative manner, such that processes can be seen as eroding professional autonomy. He argues that QA processes misrecognise the tacit, complex, and situated nature of professional learning, and neglect the need to keep less explicit aspects of professional work under critical control. Eraut (2000) argues that professional work involves situated decision making; in turn, this involves rapid intuitive decisions based on tacit and situated understandings of the situation. For Eraut (2000), it is important to consider situated learning, which strongly relates professional development to greater individual variations in different contexts. Eraut (2004) has also argued the importance of recognising that overly standardised education denies the existence of complexity by over-simplifying the processes and outcomes of learning and professional development. Taking up these arguments, this study focuses on the situated experiences of QA processes on the part of professionals, and their perspectives on the impact such processes have had on their practices, as reported in Chapters 4 and 5.

#### **1.5.4. Learning organisations**

Another concept associated with QA in HE is the use of student feedback to improve

services and professional practices, and thus to promote learning organisations (see sections 1.5.2 and 1.5.3). Eraut (2000) has argued that procedural knowledge alone, or following a manual at the organisational level, is not the only path leading to such ends. In his view, it also involves ‘propositional knowledge, situational knowledge, professional experience and judgment’ (Eraut, 2000:128). Eraut (2000) noted that social, or tacit, knowledge is exercised in different ways, and according to different rules, such as ‘situational understanding’, ‘standard, routinised procedures’ and ‘intuitive decision-making’ (Eraut, 2000:126). According to Eraut (2000), the prior knowledge of individuals is ‘resituated in the new setting and integrated with other knowledge acquired through participation’ (Eraut, 2000:132). He summarizes tacit knowledge in action, describing it as routinised, while also highlighting the nature of processes in acknowledging the importance of variables derived from contexts and discourses (Eraut, 2000). There is, in other words, a pre-existing stock of knowledge resources which we use to interpret and gain understanding prior to acting. Indeed, it is important to consider influential factors, such as: understanding the new situation; understanding the concept, as well as changing it into a form that is appropriate for the situation; and, integrating knowledge in the implementation of action (Eraut, 2000). In the current study, I build on Eraut’s (2000) arguments by: focusing on the influences of the tacit and explicit knowledge of participants; and, exploring the combined effects of propositional knowledge, situational knowledge, professional experience, and judgment in my research context. This study explores how these processes can be influential in professional development and how knowledge is expanded, modified, or even transformed by organisational learning (Eraut, 2000), as reported in Chapter 5.

#### **1.5.5. Quality assurance as accountability**

Quality assurance has been used as a means to increase accountability as part of the micro-economic reform agenda prevalent in HE, more generally (Brown, 2000; Morley, 2003a; Morley & Rassool, 2000). Quality assurance processes are understood to involve mechanisms meant to aid in achieving standardisation and transparency via measurable and quantitative parameters, so that the public can hold the processes and their results accountable. Such mechanisms carry with them, however, the epistemological fallacy of

potentially being a one-way evaluation. This fact raises broader concerns about QA processes (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Hodson & Thomas, 2003; Hoetch, 2006). Morley (2003a:53) underscores the dilemma introduced by this conceptualisation of QA, saying the following:

[A]ccountability in higher education appears to be a democratizing discourse. However, it is value laden in so far as it privileges certain types of knowledge, pedagogies, outcomes and management processes over others. Accountability is a common-sense term that over-simplifies power relations.

QA policy is repeatedly portrayed as seemingly intrusive processes, and as emphasising compliance for the purposes of accountability (Ball 1998b; Morley, 2003a; Peters, 2006), rather than to facilitate improvements in teaching and learning (Harvey, 2006; Morley, 2003a). This study extends the notion of oversimplifying pedagogical, contextual differences, and ignores professional influences on teaching and learning outcomes; it attempts to achieve accountability through standardisation and transparency in educational activities. Some arguments (see chapter 4), however, discuss the potential for the proliferation of different QA practices in different HE contexts.

Documenting and analysing QA in HE in a conceptualized and processual manner has shown QA to be a highly complex concept. Similarly, the impacts of the process can have a multitude of situational meanings, the implications of which may not always be relevant or apparent. With this in mind, there is the final possibility that QA can also be considered as a 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1980). As an academician and a researcher, I believe in the creativity of those participating in the construction of social truth, and in the ways that they draw upon the discursive frameworks in which they are located. Along these same lines, Foucault (1980:12) argues:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hand, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also elements of its articulation. In other words,

individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.

Foucault (1980) explains the problem of trying to constitute a unitary, singular body animated by the individual wills of a multiplicity of actors. His critique supports the notion that, given the ‘net-like’ nature of power, a regime of truth involved in QA will be discursive rather than possessive. In other words, our subjectivities are shaped by the discourses that are available or in circulation. As Foucault (1980) argues above, power is relational and it only becomes apparent when exercised; it can be employed at different levels and through many dimensions, exercised in practices, techniques and procedures.

Quality assurance can be seen and conceptualised in different ways, gaining situated meanings in each particular HE context. Given this observation on the nature of QA, this empirical study is nested within the literature challenging the standardisation and transparency of the QA framework and its processes. As a professional in an HE context, I am fully aware of the tacit nature associated with much professional work (Eraut, 2000; 2004; Robertson, 2005). I have engaged with the work of Morley (2003a) and Ball (1998b), documenting the complexities and critiques that have been made about the traditional technical-empiricist approach in the educational context, which are based upon idealistic assumptions of standardisation and transparent means of transmitting information, thoughts and values.

In this study, I have attempted to fill the gaps inherent to the technical-empiricist approach to QA by taking account of studies where the focus is on the influence of epistemological issues, the influence of context, and the influence of participants in implementing QA. The aim is to identify the factors that might influence QA processes across different educational contexts. I acknowledge the approach of social constructivists in saying that there is no neutral description, interpretation, theorisation or explanation of any individual phenomenon. The literature review shows that QA is a multi-faceted concept, which can be illuminated very differently from different epistemological positions. I acknowledge that QA is a highly complex concept, and while it can seem benign and meant to benefit all parties, its implications are often more ambiguous. I am informed by insights from critical social perspectives, such as recognition of the constitutive effects of texts and how these



texts shape our social world. This is discussed more fully in the following chapter.

## **1.6. Summary of this chapter and thesis structure**

This chapter began with a discussion of the rising importance of QA in HE contexts, and briefly examined the factors driving its continued development. By drawing on recent literature, it also considered conceptualisations of QA and its relationship to the context of globalised HE. This chapter also drew attention to some of the rhetoric of QA in HE in global contexts, discussing the assumptions behind QA as well as the reasons behind the urgent introduction of QA into the HE context. In section (1.1), the rationale for the research was explained, along with my personal motivations for the study in section (1.2), and how these factors relate to my own professional location and development. In section (1.3), I provided background on my choice of research topic and the context of my own institution in North Cyprus, at both a national and organisational level.

In section (1.4) of this chapter, I state the three research questions addressed by this study, and explain the rationale behind each. The first research question explores the background of QA, and how QA has developed in North Cyprus HE; this discussion is presented in Chapter 3. The second research question deals with how academics at EUL understand and value QA in their efforts to achieve quality HE provision; the findings are discussed in Chapter 4. The third research question explores the issues confronting academics at EUL stemming from their implementation of QA; the findings are discussed in chapter 5. The remainder of this thesis maintains a central focus on these three research questions.

In section (1.5) I discussed the conceptual framework for the study and explained my assumptions and arguments about the conceptualisation of QA in HE contexts. This chapter has discussed the different conceptualisations of QA in the HE context; the social constructivist perspective employed here recognises the tacit and situated nature of academic practice and its dependence on professional experience, knowledge and judgments. The conceptual framework as provided identifies the importance of the influence of context and individuals' professional development in the implementation and

practice of QA in particular, and organisational learning more broadly.

Toward this end, the thesis is divided into four further chapters. Chapter 2 explains the methodology, research design, and ethical issues adopted, practiced, and addressed in this research. This chapter also discusses the limitations of the research methods and sampling strategies, and points to the limitations which became apparent after the research had been conducted, such as the lack of attention given to the gender dimension.

Chapter 3 examines the policy context and the policy drivers behind the development of QA in HE contexts. This chapter includes discussions on both the massification and globalisation of HE, and explores the impact of the Bologna Process on QA. This chapter also discusses the introduction and influences of the QA process in Turkish HE. This provides a good example of policy transfer and highlights the challenges of transferring a UK-specific QA framework to a Turkish national context. In addition to discussing the influences of the Bologna Process and its introduction in a broad sense, this chapter also touches upon the effects of its attempted implementation in North Cyprus HE more specifically. It then identifies and discusses some of the political and economic drivers behind the introduction of QA in HE in North Cyprus before providing a detailed documentary analysis and recounting the implementation of QA at EUL. The discussions in this chapter address the first research question.

Chapter 4 presents and analyses the interview data prior to discussing the perspectives of academics regarding the QA process, addressing the second research question enumerated above. It then discusses the views of academics and their understanding of QA as it pertains to the provision of quality HE, accounting for differences in conceptualisations of QA detected among academics at EUL.

Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the influences on and practices of QA, and identifies a different range of potential implementation processes informed by the experiences of the academics at EUL. In addressing the third research question, this chapter follows the discussion sections of Chapters 3 and 4. The discussion in this chapter is combined with, and supported by, the literature presented in Chapter 3. By making reference to Chapter 3

and the findings presented in Chapter 4, this chapter provides arguments and discusses, in greater detail, the issues confronting academics in their implementation of QA. Lastly, this chapter explores contextual impacts on QA practices by offering insight into how the conceptualisation of QA can influence the professional development of academics.

Lastly, Chapter 6 draws together conclusions from the preceding four chapters and reflects on the research process as a whole. This chapter discusses the limitations of the research and, in answering the research questions, offers a series of recommendations for improvements to the QA practices currently in place at EUL. This chapter also considers the implications of QA in HE at three different levels: international, national, and organisational. Finally, this chapter offers suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Research methodology and research design**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter begins by outlining the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research. It then describes and explains the methodology, design and associated research methods that were used to carry out this research. This chapter rationalises why these particular research instruments and methodology were considered appropriate for answering the research questions; it also provides the research context and describes the research design. Further, this chapter discusses some of the ethical issues which arose during the research process and the significance of the role of the researcher's identity. This chapter then describes how the research design worked in practice, assesses the methods and the data generated and provides methodological reflections on the research process.

### **2.2. Ontological and epistemological positioning**

#### **2.2.1. Social constructivist framework and interpretivism**

My epistemological and ontological choice of constructivism as a philosophical paradigm is in line with Cohen *et al* (2005) who argue that social reality depends on the subjective experience of individuals who seek to understand the way the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world. In this study my epistemological choice is to look for an idiographic understanding of social science which is multi-layered and complex (Cohen *et al*, 2005). Dunne *et al* (2005:84) describe constructivist epistemology in this way:

Constructivist epistemology although in different ways through its radical and social variants always highlights knowledge as a human production. This has introduced a new significance to the understandings and perspectives of social actors in given contexts.

Further, Dunne *et al* (2005) explain constructivism as a social paradigm which suggests

that the social world is not given fixed identities but rather has different perspectives and understandings of individuals. This echoes Patton's (2002) and Usher's (1996) view of the constructivist approach which offers deliberative democracy in the postmodern age; for them constructivism holds the concept that knowledge is a matter of knowing differently and captures different perspectives. This research uses a constructivist paradigm as the underlying basis of the methodology, focusing its primary concern on how each participant constructs meaning out of their inter-related and interchanging multiple realities. This study also intends to return and re-examine taken-for-granted experience and perhaps to uncover new and/or forgotten meanings.

My professional role and the constructivist approach of my epistemological consideration helped me to focus exclusively on the meaning-making of the individuals' mind and travel to the unique experience of each participant. My main argument would be that each participant's way of making sense of the world is accepted as valid and as worthy of respect as any other multiple and diverse perspectives explored.

Furthermore, the aim has been to produce holistic explanations and arguments of the researched phenomenon in my research contexts. Therefore, it is, to a great extent, hermeneutic in nature for, as Cohen *et al* (2005) argue, hermeneutics involves recapturing meanings, recovering and reconstructing the intentions of participants in a situation. What can be constructed through hermeneutic and interpretive epistemology are meanings within contexts which focus on social practices within a context (Schostak, 2006; Usher, 1996).

According to Cohen *et al*(2005) an interpretive process means is?constructing meaning out of lived experiences that aim at discovering their consequences for action. Thus, the philosophical underpinning of my research approach is to interpret the research phenomenon of social life within 'its context, its epoch, its way of life' as highlighted by Schostak (2006:77). This interpretive approach is aligned with the ontological basis of my study because I recognize that social reality is regarded as the product of processes by which social actors together negotiate the meanings for their actions and practices in a situated, context dependent way. This concurs with Lindlof and Taylor (2002:31) who

argue that: ‘For the interpretivist, it is important to see social action from the actors’ point of view to understand what is happening’. I turned to the literature in order to strengthen my arguments on this, and particularly influential in my research is the focus on ‘sense-seeking’ by Usher (1996:19) who maintains:

[From an] interpretive framework then all knowledge is perspective-bound and partial i.e. relative to that framework. Knowledge therefore is always a matter of knowing *differently* rather than cumulative increase, identity or confirmation.

In this study, I focus on some significant issues of exploring the unique situations and contextualised factors that have impacted on academics’ experience differently. Following this approach, I was able to look for not only a greater and deeper understanding of the uniqueness but also the complexity of discourse and what was embedded in the process. Within this kind of research, as Cohen *et al* (2005) maintain, investigating the taken-for-granted and micro-concepts, individual perspective, personal constructs, negotiated meanings and definitions of situations are basic to the interpretive approach. An interpretive approach sees people as a primary data source and gives value to their perceptions; moreover, it provides collective meanings, reasoning processes and social norms (Mason, 2005). Since the fundamental nature of my inquiry is about the participants’ perceptions of subjective experience, I therefore followed qualitative inquiry as a methodological stance and an interpretive approach that concentrated on meanings of experience and their developmental effects on individual and social levels.

### **2.3. Qualitative inquiry**

This empirical study privileged a qualitative research design to explore QA processes and academics’ experiences of QA practices in the EUL. The views, emotions and perceptions of participants can be captured in qualitative research and enable participants not only to depict and share their experiences but also to explain issues and details that are relevant to them in a rich and situated way. Following an interpretive qualitative research approach, my role is to attempt to interpret the data from individuals’ own perspectives and provide an understanding of participants’ consciousness and meaning of their knowledge.

The theoretical premises of this approach can be found in a number of authors' writings. For example, Mason (2005:24) states that qualitative research is 'characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data driven and context sensitive'. Moreover, in terms of the purpose of qualitative inquiry, Flick (2006) points out that qualitative research is orientated towards analysing cases in their temporal and local contexts, starting with people's expressions and activities. My interest from the beginning of my research journey was in exploring and illuminating details and trivial aspects within the micro-social views of participants that might otherwise be taken for granted. The aim was to investigate the 'taken-for-granted, micro concepts of individual perspective, personal constructs, negotiated meanings, definitions of situations' (Cohen *et al*, 2005:35).

I assume that there are various occurrences and situations that affect academics' experiences of quality assurance processes. My preference for this methodological approach was therefore to allow participants to express, in their own words, whatever they felt was significant to them, and thus to explore why and how things happen, and to acquire an understanding of why things happen the way they do. The methodology that I followed enabled me to conduct my research and construct my thesis in ways that reflected my philosophical values in line with Creswell (2007). In his view, qualitative research is associated with making interpretations and the readers, the participants and the researcher are making interpretations of multiple views of the problem emerge (Creswell, 2007).

## **2.4. Phenomenology**

With the epistemological baseline of constructivist epistemology and a qualitative route, I position my research within a phenomenological research design, as described by Patton (2002), Denscombe (2005) and Schostak (2006). Patton (2002) points out that phenomenology sees the experience as conscious awareness that is constructed through experience by reaching perceptions and meanings of complex realities. Patton (2002:106) identifies some particular features of phenomenology including the following observations:

[All] our understanding comes from sensory experience of phenomena experience must be described, explicated, and interpreted interpretation is essential to an understanding of experience phenomenologists focus on how we put together the phenomena we experience in such a way as to make sense of the world, and in doing so, develop a worldview.

Indeed, individuals' experience involves variety, multiplicity and complexities (Denscombe, 2005; Schostak, 2006). In this study it is considered that the strength of phenomenology lies in its capacity to provide insight into individual views and experience in its sensitivity to contexts and giving credence to multiple realities in social construction (Schostak, 2006). This is strengthened by Patton (2002:104), who states that phenomenology provides methodological insights by:

[C]arefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon – how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others.

Patton (2002) argues that the phenomenological view is not interested in factual status or how often it happens but rather the aim is to explore what people experience and how they interpret their experiences and understandings of the phenomenon. He adds that phenomenological descriptions are authentic and complex (Patton, 2002). Within these various attractions of phenomenology I was also attracted by the notion of totality and multiplicity of social reality as Denscombe (2005:100) describes:

Phenomenology does not treat interpretations of the social world as totally individual things. Necessarily, they are shared between groups, cultures and societies, and it is only at these levels that phenomenology recognizes the possibility of there being multiple realities.

As highlighted above, unlike positivist approaches, phenomenology displaces the notion of one true reality but acknowledges the possibility of multiple realities and accepts that things can be seen in different ways at different times and in different circumstances and each has to be recognised as being valid in its own right (Denscombe, 2005). In a similar vein, Schostak (2006) describes phenomenology as being sensitive to interactions in social settings, and sees people as accounting for their actions and experience; these accounts of invariant structures, or ideal types, could be drawn out from the features that are shown to



be common to a range of different actions.

Following this methodological approach in this study also made me aware of some of the issues that I have to be cautious about in relation to my phenomenological perspective. At first my interest in phenomenology was the attraction that it holds a perspective that is purely about subjective experience and looks for unique views (Creswell, 2007). However, in my deeper understanding of phenomenology I am more impressed with Patton's (2002) and Denscombe's (2005) descriptions of phenomenological study. For them phenomenological study assumes commonality, totality and multiplicity that highlights the essence of shared experience. In this research, my inquiry empowered the participants to express their views and feelings in greater depth, drawing on their experience. Following an interpretive approach I reflect on the particulars that constitute the whole and multiple realities of the participants' experiences. The best research method for this is through in-depth interviewing, as will be discussed in the following section.

## **2.5. Research methods**

### **2.5.1. Semi-structured interviews**

This study, having an exploratory nature, required a data collection method that would serve this aim. The choice of in-depth, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix II) provided the best means of addressing the research questions because of their potential to 'understand the social actor's experience and perspective' (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:173). Flick (2006) suggests that usually the interviewees have a complex stock of knowledge of the issues that are being researched, and this knowledge includes assumptions that can be explored through answering open questions. Knowledge formation in this study is conceived of as being 'circular, iterative, spiral – not linear and cumulative as portrayed in positivist/empiricist epistemology' (Usher, 1996:19). Moreover, using interviews in qualitative research offered the opportunity to 'travel deeply and broadly into subjective realities' (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:177). Interviewing as a research method involves a 'challenge to renew, broaden and enrich the conception of knowledge' (Kvale, 1996:10).

My own personal experience helped shed light and find focal points when investigating the participants' experience and subjective accounts of the research phenomenon and the research context. In addition, I was also a member of the research context, sharing more or less the same contextual background as the participants. This certainly put me in the position of an insider in this research; being an insider and sharing the same context, necessarily I have some similar insights and perspectives on the researched topic. As an insider researcher I gain from my extensive and intimate knowledge of the research context and the day-to-day activities of participants in the organisation. These dynamic processes of interviewing and ethical issues of my researcher identity as insider are discussed later, in section 2.7. The whole process of interviewing has been experienced differently and each has its unique quality. In some views, interviewing is a complex method as it involves the dynamic interaction of researcher and interviewee. This is described in Schostak (2006:15) for whom an interview is not just a simple act of asking and listening:

At the heart of interview, therefore, there are essential discrepancies, differences between views, a continual postponement of certitude and comprehensibility, or, a lack that can never be filled except in fantasy. Each interview is a partial view of particular states of affairs or events. Any move one person makes to or away from another involves a degree of risk, a risk of misunderstanding, a misjudgement, of misadventure.

As argued above, interviews can become quite sensitive and political both during and after the research process. Schostak (2006:15) proposes a discursive explanation for interviewing: it is an encounter whereupon 'each encounter involves negotiations, calculations, interpretations'. From the beginning of the research process, I recognised that interviewing is a dynamic, interactive and political process. The interview process is explained in the following sections, including where it became a challenge, risk or misunderstanding as Schostak (2006) describes it.

### **2.5.2. Policy and documentary analysis**

The major motivation and rationale to do documentary analysis came primarily from my professional experience. I was aware of the local variations in documentation from my

professional background and that QA texts were developed in different ways in various faculties of EUL. The QA text(s) in EUL are developed to facilitate improvements in three core areas (see figure 5). The QA processes are expected to review comprehensively the areas (see 3.6.1). This is regulated by different texts, schemes and procedures within each faculty. My primary concern as an academic was that other academics were very uncertain about the procedures and impacts of QA in EUL. Firstly, I conducted the interviews, and this made me aware of the need to do documentary analysis to complement data collected from the interviews. When I was conducting the interviews my assumptions led me to suspect some of the institutional influences of QA texts developed in EUL. Then, I undertook documentary analysis to find out more about academics' understanding of QA texts and *how* this understanding influences their QA practices in EUL.

In the education arena, policy research first emerged as a discipline premised on statistical techniques and linear hierarchical processes which were developed by government and disseminated/implemented by the practitioners (Blackmore & Lauder, 2005). Blackmore and Lauder (2005: 97) suggest that this approach to policy was favoured by governments as it was assumed that such 'rational and technocratic models' based on quantitative research were believed to be objective and generalizable. They see this approach: 'associated with an incrementalist position in which policy is perceived as a pluralist, consensual process mediated by the state in relatively benign ways' (2005:97). This assumed that education could be measured in scientific and graded signifiers. This modernist and rationalist model was criticized by critical social scientists, who questioned the value neutrality of policy texts and their generalisability to broader contexts. From a critical social perspective, Blackmore and Lauder (2005:99) highlight how globalization has also led to the 'articulation of policy transnationally', although they question the appropriateness of policy transfer and the effects of such importation. The complexity lies in the emergence of overlapping global policy which works trans-nationally as well as within national borders. This makes it important to explore how policies that are articulated at a macro-level might be taken up at both the national and organisational level. In the actual discourses of implementation, QA processes might be different from what was intended, and so what actually happens in practice may give rise to unintended consequences in policy discourses.

For example, Ball (1993a) argues that policy texts are inherently ambiguous and open to degrees of interpretation. The underlying reason for this argument is that quality assurance processes can be formulated but certain 'keywords' will necessarily undergo shifts in use and meaning. In order to strengthen this argument I follow Ball (1993a), who has made a sociological commentary on the effect of language in policy discourses. Ball (1993a) highlights the fact that the policy includes the language of concepts and vocabulary which discourses make available to us. However, he argues that language is never transparent, instead involving real struggles over the interpretation of any discourse and the subsequent enactment of policies. Ball (1993a) points to the influence of local politics and culture over the processes of interpretation; there might be struggle involved in translating generic solutions into national contexts and institutional practices. Ball (1993a) has made an explanation of policy as a text and policy as a discourse. Making this distinction Ball (1993a:12) acknowledges the influence of context and circumstances that involve 'creative social action not robotic creativity'.

In my research context, I will show that there are particularly interesting issues that QA policy texts can be implemented differently. These influences relating to the autonomy of the nation state are some of the factors that influenced the implementation and the consequences of quality assurance assessment processes. To this end, this research explores Blackmore and Lauder's concerns as to 'how [policy] discourses [are] appropriated and reworked' (Blackmore & Lauder 2005:99). My argument would be to have exploratory insights into the actual processes and consequences in my research contexts. My researcher position also acknowledges the arguments which see policy texts as constructing what is taken as normal and abnormal in our social worlds. Following a social constructivist stance, I would question the value neutrality that was supposed to underpin the rational model of quality assurance assessment. My aim was, therefore, to explore what work its texts 'do', and also exploring the perspectives and experiences of participants in my study of its processes.

## **2.6. Research management and conduct of the research**

### **2.6.1. The interview focus**

In this study the interviews were semi-structured to the extent that a set of interview questions was designed to cover the topics central to this research. As shown in Appendix II, which provides the initial research schedule focused on three broad areas:

- What is the background of QA development, and how has QA been developed in the North Cyprus HE context?
- How do academics at the European University of Lefke understand and value QA in achieving quality HE provision?
- What are the issues confronting academics at the European University of Lefke in implementing QA processes?

### **2.6.2. Instrument design and research pilot**

The interview process started with a pilot study. In the pilot study I held interviews with four academic staff. The selection of the participants was on disciplinary subjects, with a range of academic titles; one assistant professor, 2 senior lecturers and a teaching assistant, 3 female and 1 male, across 3 different faculties in positions including Faculty of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and Faculty of Architecture and Engineering and with a range of experience from 2 to 17 years.

The interview was streamlined and focused on the points necessary for the purpose of answering my research questions. The type of interview I chose for my study was in-depth, semi-structured interviews, as these allow space for manoeuvring during data collection for on-the-spot changes, so that responsiveness to the respondents and flexibility to attend to their meanings were increased. In the pilot study the interview schedule worked well in practice and participants talked freely about how they felt about the QA processes. They explained how they experienced the practices within contextual parameters, and what the

influences and impacts of QA processes were on their professional practices. In my interviews, being flexible helped me to gather deeper meaning and I sought to illuminate and provide deeper and exploratory as well as explanatory data from the interviews. The experience of the pilot interviews suggested that they had an exploratory character which fitted my research aims. Almost all the participants were welcoming and there seemed to be a friendly atmosphere, as I was expecting. I did not use a voice recorder for the pilot interviews, but kept a written record and wrote my field notes. Their conversational character provided the opportunity for some revision of some issues that needed clarification and adjustment. However, my interview notes and reflections on my field notes made me aware of some issues related to the interview questions.

The first interview was conducted with a colleague who was the first to advise me to reduce the number of interview questions. It was in my field notes that we had an informal discussion on my interviewing experience and this was the critical issue that we talked about. Then my supervisor, Professor Louise Morley, advised me that some of the interview questions in the pilot study were double tasking. For example, ‘What are the challenges to implementing quality assurance processes? What are the factors which make it difficult?’ After the pilot study, due to time constraints as well as the quality and flow of the interviewing process, the interview questions were reduced to five and reconstructed (see Appendix III). Thus, the pilot study not only helped me to check the suitability of the interview questions, applicability, timing and access, but also helped me with other issues that I had not considered before.

### **2.6.3. The execution of the study: access, sampling and participants**

The interviews were held with academic staff in EUL. My sample of twenty comprised one academic from each department in five faculties. The strategy adopted for sampling was in accordance with the proposals of Miles and Huberman (1994:28), where criterion refers to ‘all cases that meet some criterion, useful for quality assurance’ (cited in Creswell, 2007: 127). Every participant in my research was chosen for his or her suitability in accordance with the criteria that were significant for the study. The criteria that I focused on were:

academic discipline, seniority (administrative duties, various types of experience, and number of years in the field), nationality and gender.

The interview sample was composed of two professors (whose experience ranged between (30-20 years), twelve assistant professors (20-5), four senior lecturers (20-5) and two teaching assistants (5-1). Some of the participants were selected for their involvement in decision-making positions at faculty and departmental level. In my sample, six of the participants held an administrative position (dean, head of department, manager and coordinator). In EUL there is no distinction between academics and administrative posts but those academics who also hold administrative posts have fewer teaching hours. My sample of twenty comprised ten males (eight when two dropped out) and ten females. When it came to defining the nationality of the interviewees, half of the participants were Turkish Cypriot (1 dropped out); six were Turkish (1 dropped out) and four British. Although there is a variation from year to year, the academics at EUL are mainly from North Cyprus, the next largest group are from Turkey and the third from the UK. The criterion of having different nationalities was to have comparative views and variety in terms of experience. Table 1 below presents the demographic information of the sample.

**Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants**

		Number of Participants	Experience Range (years)
Gender	Female	10	
	Male	8	
Nationality	British	4	
	Turkish Cypriot	9	
	Turkish	5	
Academic Title	Teaching Assistant	2	1-5
	Senior Lecturer	4	5-20
	Assistant Professor	10	5-20
	Professor	2	20-30
Number of Participants with an Administrative duty		6	
Total		18	

**Table 2: Disciplinary Location of Participants**

	Number of Participants
Faculty of Communication Sciences	4
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	5
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Technologies	3
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	2
Faculty of Architecture and Engineering	4



Table 2 presents the disciplinary location of the participants in the study. It was important to me to have an academic from each department participate in order to produce a snapshot, view and perspective from each department. However, I would not make any claims to representativeness of each department, considering that my sample was comprised of only one member from each department. This type of claim may lead to misunderstanding and misjudgement.

#### **2.6.4. Conduct of the interviews**

After the pilot study, the actual interviews started with 20 participants but when the time came for the interviews, two of them dropped out for personal reasons. The interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. From my field notes and transcriptions, I recognised that in some of the interviews I was very strict and followed each question exactly and precisely. During the interviews I realise the complexity of interviewing skills and the difficulties of managing such a dynamic process. I was aware that that some of the acts occurred spontaneously. For example, some of the acts came on impulse and were not easily recognised at first, as I concentrated on the flow of the interview process. In some of the interviews, I was aware that the participants had already answered the next question in the former one. Then a more useful strategy was when I asked for more examples from respondents of issues that they raised.

For data collection after the pilot interviews, digital recording was used. Recording the interviews was advantageous in keeping the authenticity of the information, as trying to write or make notes of the interview may end up with ‘a few exact phrases and snippets of dialogue—but a large amount of the interview is always lost’ (Lindlof& Taylor, 2002:187). I asked participants’ permission to record the interviews and then I recorded the interviews. I gave them assurances that their confidentiality and anonymity would be respected in the reporting of the data. I also gave assurances that I would not use the recordings for any other purposes except my thesis. Most of the interviews (15) were tape recorded with the agreement of the interviewees. In a few (3), where the interviewees declined to make a voice recording, I took notes. Their reasons for declining were that they did not want their voice recorded for personal reasons and psychologically they said that they feel safer and

more comfortable with note taking. They found the recording a technical and unnatural way of conversation. The interviews which were recorded and transcribed were kept in computer files as Microsoft Word documents. I kept a separate file to record my observations and overall impressions of the participants and my own experiences during the interviews. For example, some key issues during and after the interviews were noted, such as gestures, hesitations, and respondents not wanting to answer specific questions. This helped me to reflect on participants' attitudes and interactions, and the dynamic process of interviewing. Keeping field notes provided me with a personal log, and this helped me to keep the record of the interview process and my experience of conducting interviews. Flick (2006) suggests that the production of reality in texts starts with the taking of field notes. These field notes were also helpful when I started the data analysis and text construction.

Another issue that needs to be elucidated is the language of the interviews. As mentioned earlier, English is the second language in North Cyprus and almost everybody uses English either for writing or communication purposes. Therefore, I conducted most of the interviews (14) in English, although four of the participants preferred to conduct their interview in Turkish. In my field notes and reflections, I made some notes on the benefits of doing the interviews in the participants' native language (Turkish) – they were richer and more authentic in their contents than the English-language interviews. This also applied to the native speakers of English in relation to having rich information input both as content and as perspective on the researched phenomenon. For example, I observed the cultural difference of the British interviewees being freer and more critical in their explanations and commentary. All of the interviews were carried out face-to-face in quiet offices and most of them were in a conversational mode. During one of the interviews with a head of department, the interview was interrupted by another academic staff member, for something urgent to be solved, and I did not take the risk of stopping the recorder in case I could not operate it again.

## **2.7. Ethical issues and engaging my self-identity in the research process**

There were many ethical issues involved in the research, which arose throughout the research process, and most of which were essentially concerned with the relationship of an insider researcher and the participants. For example, power relationships were involved from the beginning of the research process: choosing a topic, research field, sampling, data collection and controlling the parameters. There was also the need to address the ‘interpersonal, interactional, communicative and emotional’ aspects of the interview (Cohen *et al*, 2005:279). Thus, conventional ethical considerations and principles may not necessarily be sufficient to guide the practice of qualitative research. The interviewing process was considered to be ‘an ethical as well as a political act’ (Schostak, 2006:135).

Throughout the research process I was open about the purpose of my research and why I had chosen to investigate quality assurance processes in my research context. Sometimes I faced the dilemma of maintaining distance as an insider, and being a lecturer in the research context, I decided the only thing to do was to engage as the person I was. Through the research, my identity as an insider researcher gave me the luxury of easy access both in the field and to participants’ experience. So am I an insider? The answer to this question is strongly ‘Yes’ and on most occasions being an insider has been advantageous. During my research processes, empathy and compassion seemed to enable participants to find their voices. Though interview processes were very interactive, they sometimes became political and fraught with ethical tensions. For instance, I was aware that some of the views expressed were produced with intimacy and assumed empathy, in other words the participants believed that I shared the same view or similar concerns about the researched topic. I noticed also that I was more taken by the information and views that compelled me to recognise something in my own experience. These ethical considerations and challenges of power are described in detail in the following sections.

### **2.7.1. Ethical procedures and access to participants**

When I received approval for the field work from the University of Sussex, first of all I informed the rectorate (vice-rector – administrative affairs) of EUL, explained my research topic and obtained permission for the interviews with the academics. I acquired the names, academic titles and telephone numbers of academic staff in each faculty from the personnel department. Then I decided on the names of the academics whom I proposed to include in the interview. The first introduction was via phone calls. Firstly, I contacted those whom I already knew. For the rest of the participants I asked for help from the executive secretaries of each faculty and department to contact the participants. In this preliminary induction I explained my position as a doctoral student and that I wanted to conduct an interview with them for my research. I also specified the focus of the interview and asked for the most suitable time for the interview, adding that it would not take more than one hour. Then the actual arrangement for the interview was made on an individual basis. The research method used in this study brought with it a series of ethical issues, such as issues about informed consent. These issues included maintaining the anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of the data provided. The interviewees were therefore assured about confidentiality and that their contributions would remain anonymous. This was done to make the participants feel more comfortable and free to express their ideas. Some of the participants were studying for a PhD in the UK; this also had an impact as we often come together and talk about doctorate-related matters and share our experiences. This was an advantage and made me feel at ease during the induction process of the interviews. Some of the proposed academics did not want to participate, either because they were too busy, or because they considered that they did not have anything to say on my research topic. I then had to ask some other members in the department. At the end of this induction process, I had 20 participants, one academic from each department in five faculties. In this study I also had documentary analysis (see section 2.5.2) as, for ethical considerations, permission was sought from the relevant authorities to analyse these texts (see Appendices V and VI).

### **2.7.2. Researcher as insider and ethical issues**

Relating these ethical considerations of the researcher's identity and the power relationship, there should be a careful consideration of the boundaries of social and professional norms in the research context. One of the critical concerns in this research was my own role in the research as an insider. This begs the question of whether there were any advantages attached to my status as an insider. Would my position as an insider bring deeper, more thorough knowledge about the participants' experiences? These issues arose both during and after the research process. Srivastava (2006) states that the multiplicity of researcher and participants' identities and how they intersect might make the interaction problematic but she acknowledges that this is vital in the exchange process. For example, most of the participants in my study were in senior academic positions. I presented myself as a researcher (doctorate student) but this did not change the reality of my position as a colleague. In a sense, this was advantageous in that participants tried to support me as a colleague in the way they treated me and tried to help me go through with the process easily.

Being an insider in this research proved to be advantageous primarily during the interview process. The participants were willing to speak candidly, and good rapport – and empathy – was established, which helped me to convey a sense of neutrality throughout the interview process. In this respect, I acknowledge that my familiarity with the research context and participants helped me to maintain the flow of communication. As a result, I had easy access to rich data and deep insight into participants' experiences as regards the researched phenomenon.

However, I was also aware that being an insider researcher challenged some ethical and power issues both during and after the research. In some interviews it was inevitable that my position as a researcher and a lecturer involved strong power dynamics. Considering the hierarchies, I was also aware that various ethical claims on the research process might pull me in different directions, such as the possible tension that might occur between the insider researcher and a lecturer.

For example, two colleagues withdrew from research at the beginning, noting that the topic was somewhat political and that it would not be too ethical to criticise their own workplace. From the two colleagues who declined to participate, I gained the sense of sensitivity towards the power issue. Perhaps their senior status and administrative roles and responsibilities made it difficult for them to voice an opinion. The silence of the participants proved the political sensitivity of the research topic and also that they were not willing to talk about the critical issues of their work context and academic roles. Participants felt awkward and defensive and the feeling of seduction especially was explained as their reason for not participating in the interviews.

I had such an experience of power relations with one of the participants in the pilot study who had been my student. She is now one of the teaching assistants in the Department of Computer Engineering. During the pilot interview she asked me about the topic and wanted me to explain the questions. Her starting point was quite interesting as she said: ‘What do you want to hear?’ To me this was on account of the power dynamic. For her our relation was not researcher and interviewer, because she still had the feeling of respect for me as my former student and felt that she should tell me things that would satisfy me. Although I did all I could do to avoid imposing expectations on the participants, it was nevertheless unavoidable that they might feel obliged to say what they thought I wanted to hear during the interviews. In her discussion, Srivastava (2006) argues that in order to ease the exchange in the process it requires adjusting respective positions, such as reducing or increasing power differentials in order to mediate the dynamics of the exchange.

One of the major dilemmas that I confronted is explained by Hill (2006: 941): ‘My role as a researcher often coerced me into stretching and even exceeding the ethical bounds of my role as a friend and vice versa’. Interviewing my colleagues in the same institution had some disadvantages. In particular, while I might be able to offer anonymity and confidentiality to some respondents, there can be no such guarantee at an institutional level. Primarily, being an insider and knowing the research context has created some power issues during the interview process. I experienced this ethical challenge and power when two of

the participants dropped out. One (dean) found the research topic very political and said he would not like to criticise his own work place. The other, who also had an administrative position on the QA committee, made a similar comment and stated that the rectorate believed that they had achieved a lot in terms of QA process, but that in reality not much had been achieved. He added that that he did not want to talk about these issues and criticize his own work. This issue also shows how various ethical claims on the research process pulled me and the research process in different directions. This silence might be the sign of the sensitive and delicate nature of my research topic and conducting research in my own work context. This was the challenge that came with my researcher identity as an insider and that took me further away from the participants, to a degree that the topic of research made them feel uncomfortable to talk to me about quality assurance. According to Denscombe (2005:170), such a feeling affects the transparency of the process if the participants feel 'awkward and defensive'. It is perhaps an indication of the power hierarchies in the research process and initial consequence of status and positions. For example, both the participants who dropped out were in higher positions in the university. For them, I may have been seen as a doctorate student and I felt a lack of power. Their concerns not to share their views about quality assurance processes may also have been related to their hierarchical positions, so that their knowledge of the research topic was confidential. Their concern might be a feeling of seduction into taking part and the fear of the consequences for their hierarchical positions. Furthermore, if they took part they would be more likely to have a sense of betrayal of their jobs. It is possible that respondents could feel threatened or concerned about the wider repercussions of their comments, and would therefore be cautious about what they said.

I was aware that the potentially contested nature of such a claim might be challenging for me as an insider researching my own workplace and my colleagues. This analysis also emerges partly in Srivastava (2006:214), when she discusses the researcher's identity: 'As real-life identities are constantly defined and redefined in relation to other's identities, so too will field identities have to change, adapt and be mediated'.

Being aware of these ethical issues of my insider position I tried to keep a distance between

my identity as a colleague and as a researcher in the whole research process. During the interviewing process, data analysis and presentation I was careful about the ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity, both about the participants and the institutions. As a principle, I decided not to reveal the identity of the participants or of any person or any institutions to which they referred or to make comparisons. In the thesis, academic titles and departments were used as a reference but not the names of the participants. Also the participants were assured that the anonymity would be preserved in any future publication. The in-depth interviews were face-to-face and because of the detailed nature of these interviews they were recorded. The recordings were made with the permission and authority of the participants. The transcriptions were done by me with the help of a colleague whom I trust, who is a PhD student and who wanted to have experience of an interviewing process for her own study. Actually, this helped me very much in terms of time management as the time spent in transcribing each interview was more than I had anticipated – some took approximately eight hours.

### **2.7.3. Values, neutrality and objectivity of the research**

Patton (2002) maintains that the values and preconceptions of the researcher may affect what you see and hear, and it is inevitable that you wrestle with your values. In these parameters, of course, my values influenced my research topic, the research design and the interpreted data. However, neither my values and shared understanding nor the familiarity of the context and the participants was contested throughout my research. Although I was an insider researcher and shared the same culture and context of the phenomena I tried to stay alert in order not to take positions and sides in this research. I also took care not to treat any participants with either prejudice or favour.

Different views have been stated about the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider researcher. For Patton (2002), when the researcher is an insider, there are advantages both in terms of access to rich data and as participants share experiences and understandings of the researched topic. Being a member of the same organisation reinforced my capacity for comfortable communication and the insider identity flavoured



the rapport and empathetic bond thus established to help me to interpret participants' perceptions more closely. Patton (2002) argues that empathy and sympathetic introspection derived from personal encounters are necessary in qualitative inquiry. For example, Hill (2006:930) suggests that researcher identity:

[R]eflects the importance of 'working the hyphens' but also demands a closer and more deliberate analysis of the experiences, beliefs, allegiances, and commitments that shape who and how the researcher writes into existence.

Hill (2006:934) relates a personal experience reflecting the advantages of 'insiderness'. It is also argued that unlike the insider, the outsider has neither been socialized in the group nor engaged in the run of experience that makes up its life, and therefore cannot have the direct, intuitive sensitivity. Nevertheless it is argued by some (Flick, 2006) that being an insider is not always advantageous and that outsiders' subjective perspectives are more fruitful. By contrast, an outsider researcher who does not have familiarity and complete understanding of the researched topic and research context may be able to fully appreciate and expose the nuances rather than the familiar. This might be reflected in more objective presentations by an outsider view (Flick, 2006).

In contrast, qualitative methodologists question the claims of objectivity in social research. Patton (2002) argues that the researcher often worries that their values and preoccupations may affect what they see, hear and record in the field, but suggests that achieving absolute objectivity and value-free science is impossible in practice and is not desirable as it might ignore respondents' intrinsic values. Patton (2002: 575) also argues that 'distance does not guarantee objectivity, it merely guarantees distance'. Similarly, Dunne *et al* (2005) remind us that claims for objectivity exclude the personal and emotional and the enumeration of the experiences of the researcher and researched. In this research, sometimes it became imperative to keep a critical distance between my researcher identity (insider researcher/academic) and the interviewees. However, I acknowledge the importance of reflexivity as crucial in social construction. As many advocate, the researcher's openness and the reflexivity of their qualitative research is important (Flick, 2006; Mason, 2005). Therefore, I would argue that reflexivity brought integrity to my inquiry. I also assume that

my researcher's identity, values and beliefs are inevitably an integral part of the analysis and should be acknowledged as such.

## **2.8. Data analysis processes**

### **2.8.1. Reflexivity in social constructivism**

The approach to analysis, the process of turning the data into text, was congruent with the overall methodological approach. Creswell (2007) advises that the processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process – they are interrelated. Hence, it is necessary at the very beginning to have some concept of how the data were gathered and the steps taken to turn the data into texts and produce arguments from these texts as social reality. In this research I followed a constructivist and interpretive approach to ensure that the data analysis was treated in a more inclusive way. Indeed one must think of the researched phenomena in terms of social analysis and social representation rather than data analysis in a narrow sense (Bryman & Hardy, 2009). Following on this, the recognition of reflexivity is endorsed in data analysis to construct arguments and written representations as being interpretive and reflexive (Bryman & Hardy, 2009; Cohen *et al*, 2005; Mason, 2005). In the process of data analysis my view accords with that of Becker and Bryman (2004), for whom social policy researchers are concerned about presenting different versions of the researched phenomena but acknowledge the notion of the trustworthiness of their conclusions and inferences. Primarily, the process of data analysis started with the evaluation of the interviews and field notes. In my research the advanced and actual data analysis started after the transcriptions of the interviews. I acknowledge that the field notes were also the important part of the analysis process that I reflect in different sections of this thesis. This was mainly important to help me to reflect some of the ethical issues, such as silences during the interview, or that two of the participants dropped out when they learned the details about the research topic. My field notes were also invaluable in reflecting my learning experience as a professional and a researcher.

For the practices of data analysis, I did not use any computer-aided qualitative data analysis program. For Patton (2002), computer programs cannot provide the creativity and intelligence that make the qualitative analysis unique. Similarly, Denscombe (2005) supports the advantage of using temporal sequence. For Denscombe (2005), computer programmes cannot analyse the implied meanings drawn from events in the background. My argument for not using any qualitative data analysis package such as QDA was that these programmes are more likely to have analysis in the form of structured coding, marking and ordering the text (Creswell, 2007).

In this study, my aim was not to produce a standardised set of results but rather to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on the researched phenomenon. The texts are created through an interpretive process. The criteria of authenticity and reflexivity were also important in presenting the interpretive texts as narrative (Becker & Bryman, 2004). Following an interpretive approach, I concentrated on making contrasts and comparisons within the data and on coding my data manually against my research questions and attending to any emergent themes. This facilitated the comparison and analysis of the data and helped with its handling and management, allowing the identification of what was relevant for the development of my explanation and arguments. My interest in referential engagement of views, ideas, feeling and practices of quality assurance assessment processes would look for practices of non-fixed, contextualized and situated identifiable concepts of quality assurance assessment in my context. My purpose was to provide ‘detailed analysis with as many facets as possible’ (Flick, 2006:137). However, in order to tackle and minimise the potential problems of being an insider researcher, the effort was undertaken to make the research as reflexive as I could, and moreover I have been careful to be reflective in the discussion of the results. The findings are presented in extracts and descriptions that also helped me to frame the study findings and more fundamentally to put forward the arguments on the researched phenomenon by presenting these multiple realities in a contextualised and situated way.

### **2.8.2. Adopting phenomenology in data analysis and presentation**

In the data analysis process I employed a phenomenological method in analyzing transcripts, and in interpreting and presenting the data. For example, I first undertook text analysis to obtain significant statements. This enabled me to identify repeated words, phrases and patterns. Creswell (2007:159) calls these ‘meaning units’. Then from the texts I developed a cluster of meanings and turned them into themes. I used these significant statements and themes to write the descriptions of what the participants experienced, what had happened (textural description) and I highlighted the significant statements, sentences and quotes that provided accounts of how participants experienced the phenomenon. This is called structural description, and it deals with how the participants experience the phenomenon in terms of conditions, situations and context (Creswell, 2007).

However, my engagement with the data analysis procedures of phenomenology made me aware of some of the critical issues of data analysis and the presentation of phenomenological research. My view accords with Creswell (2007) that Moustaka’s (1994) approach to analysis is highly structured (see Creswell, 2007:62). Creswell concludes that it is surprising to follow highly structured approaches of phenomenology on sensitive topics. In this research, during the data analysis process I recognized and experienced that my research topic was quite sensitive and sometimes could become quite political. This was related to conducting a research study in my own work context and having a research topic that involved strong evaluative concepts that are relative, controversial and sensitive. For example, some of the words and phrases identified are: quality, standardisation, cooperative, miscommunication and autonomy. Within this delicate interplay of data analysis the process was enacted with its entire social interaction and contextual details.

At this stage, I acknowledge the critiques of Denscombe (2005), who suggests that phenomenology is associated with descriptions rather than analysis, adding that the phenomenologist goes on to develop explanations based on the descriptive materials (Denscombe, 2005). In presenting the data I also pursued Creswell’s (2007) strong consideration of ‘essence’. What is important here is that the structural and textural

descriptions were used to produce a composite description that presented the essence of the phenomenon, as primarily the focus was on the common experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, in the data presentation I preferred to present the narration of the essence in discussion rather than tables and figures (Creswell, 2007). I am also impressed by the underlying feature of ‘essence’ by Creswell (2007) who also makes a reference to Moustaka’s (1994) suggestions of writing a brief creative close to the study, its inspirations and value of the knowledge, and the future directions of professional life (see Creswell, 2007:189). By doing this I think my discussions and implications are more representative. The main reason that I followed a more reflexive researcher point of view and acknowledged this reflexivity in data analysis and presentation was the privilege of the authenticity of collected data. Being confident with the variety in participants’ views and the richness of the research findings motivated me not use strict protocols of data presentations but rather a reflexive approach that enabled me to present flexible, creative and stronger arguments in presentation. Therefore, I followed the above suggestions that facilitated my reflexivity in developing creative discussions on the overall implications of the research, as seen in Chapter 4 and 5.

## **2.9. Further methodological reflections on interview process**

### **2.9.1. Issues of ‘bias’ and researcher reflexivity in the interview processes**

In any research, methodologically specific methods are utilized to try to ensure the absence of the researcher’s influence or bias, as this is perceived as a threat to the validity of the results. In the interview process, I attempted to monitor closely the connection between myself as a researcher and the interviewees. Through the research process, my close relationship with the participants gave me greater access to their experience and also added more confidence during and after the interview process. However, in the interviewing process some probing questions arose naturally. I sometimes inadvertently gave examples and expressed my feelings during the interviews with those interviewees with whom I had closer associations. It was inevitable that as a researcher my interpretation would affect the flow of the interviews. Nonetheless, this is not a disadvantage and I would not call this

‘bias’. On the contrary, I strongly believe that it can be seen as being an advantage to have a thorough knowledge of the institutional culture and organisational activities and to share the same or similar experiences and feelings with participants, and also a thorough knowledge of the research context. During the interviews, for example, I engaged in spontaneous and probing questions in order to tackle the participants and engage with different views. The example below is taken from one of the interviews:

Interviewee: The system is not set up. Every year new changes are introduced. For example, it is always personal, not global.

Interviewer: What do you mean by global, it’s not personal but global?

In my field notes I made some notes of such probing questions during the interviews. In most instances these were the times when the interviewee was silent and I used the second question to help the conversation along and break the silence. At other times I became excited by hearing some words or phrases where I tried to engage with deeper discussions and explanations, such as in the extract above. Patton (2002) argues that such probes are helpful and enable the interviewer to go deeper into the interviewee’s responses. I also acknowledge that my probing questions, asking participants to clarify and/or further elaborate their answers, and describe a particular incident to illustrate what they said or what they meant, increased the depth of views expressed and enriched the data collected. Furthermore, Dunne *et al* (2005) challenge the empiricist reluctance to put probing questions for clarification or affirmation for fear that they might contaminate or bias the data. It is believed that concerns over bias and researcher neutrality may sustain a separation of researcher and researched; instead they acknowledge interviews as social actions (Dunne *et al*, 2005). I also consider that my probing of my participants’ answers gave them a sense of my responsiveness and interest, as well as respect, for their ideas and explanation and it also increased the interpersonal aspect of the research process. Dunne *et al* (2005) suggest that following a more flexible schedule offers the possibility for extending and deepening engagement in the interview process and that this may enable authentic responses and detailed information as a valuable source of data input.

### 2.9.2. Issues of integrity and reflexivity

I would claim that during the interview process I tried, as much as I could, to be reflexive and flexible and to have a good rapport with participants. This reflexivity provides a space to critically reflect on accounts of the social conditions and how these accounts are constructed, and to make interpretations of these experiences, observations and feelings (Cohen *et al*, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Dunne *et al*, 2005). In my research, therefore, I felt that I enhance the validity of the interviews, by making sure that my interview technique would build good rapport, trust and openness and provide informants with space to express their views and share their experiences. This view is supported by Cohen *et al* (2005), who suggest that trustworthiness and its components replace the conventional views of validity and reliability in qualitative inquiry. In qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved (Cohen *et al*, 2005). As a researcher I believed that issues of reliability and validity or the quality of research is addressed through the examination of rigour, authenticity, trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007; Kvale, 1996).

In the interview process reliability and validity issues were dealt both during and after the interviews. This involved the schedule and process of interviews and the content. As a new researcher, I attempted to ensure validity in the construction of my research topic and the research process. For example, I would argue that in my research, content validity was achieved by making sure that my research questions and interview questions were relevant to the research topic (Cohen *et al*, 2005).

When conducting the research, I dealt with the issue of reliability by making sure that the questions in my interview schedule were followed in the same order in each interview that helped the participants to make comments and relations for each questions in coherence, and I tried to follow the research questions as they were written in my schedule. However, it was my recognition and experience during the interview process that following a strict protocol of the interview process does not maintain validity and reliability but may disengage the researcher from the content and social change (Dunne *et al*, 2005).

For data collection I used a voice recorder which at the time I felt would maximise the reliability of the data collection process. I did this to achieve technical safety but it created some tensions caused by the unnatural setting which arose in the interview process. As I mentioned earlier, three of the participants did not want their voice to be recorded. This might be a self criticism of my choice of a technical approach for data collection procedure.

My experience as a novice researcher helped my professional development. In future, if I conduct another interview study I would not be so focused on the neutrality of the interview process. I now see it as more important to consider how my identity as a professional and a researcher shaped the knowledge that was produced in the interviews. Following a qualitative methodology and interpretive approach, my researcher identity is intrinsic to the production of the text starting from the field, the analysis, interpretation and recontextualization (Dunne *et al*, 2005).

Accordingly, my research was itself a process of interaction between all these levels of representation, including listening, transcribing/translating and analysing, reading and re-reading. Transcribing is also an interpretive practice and process. Thus, it is acknowledged that in social research, the researcher's identity, interests and values are integral to the way that texts are analyzed, interpreted and constructed (Dunne *et al*, 2005). Usher (1996) argues that knowers and researchers and their socio-cultural contexts are inseparable. Usher (1996) continues to maintain that in hermeneutic and interpretive traditions, how a researcher contributes to the knowledge largely depends on having the right arguments and being able to subject them to the scrutiny of critical dialogue. The strongest argument of knowledge construction is made by Kvale (1996:239), for whom knowledge is constituted through dialogue and valid knowledge emerges as 'conflicting interpretations and action possibilities and are discussed and negotiated among members of community'. This is also strongly associated with being reflexive and accepting the change for the researcher himself who is able to instigate reflections of the research topic (Dunne *et al*, 2005; Kvale 1996).



### 2.9.3. Issues of 'generalisability'

In social research, knowledge is concerned not with 'generalisation, prediction, and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination' (Usher, 1996:18). As I discussed earlier, my epistemological positioning recognizes the production of knowledge as a social process (Patton, 2002). My argument in adopting a constructivist approach was seeing that social construction acknowledges the knowledge and perceptions of the participants in local context that requires idiographic understanding (Cohen *et al*, 2005). My argument of generalisability might be possible through making generalisability within my research context, through situated accounts that highlight the importance of specificity and the situatedness of social practices (Usher, 1996). In line with this the emphasis is on the discourse, and the knowledge obtained within one context is not transferable to other contexts (Kvale, 1996). Similarly, Williams (2002:135) asserts that:

Interpretivists often maintain that rather than making empirical generalizations, they are making 'theoretical inferences' that is they draw conclusions from their data about the necessary relationships that exist among categories of phenomena.

Concluding these arguments, Mason (2005) states that a strong way of allowing readers to generalize from qualitative data is by demonstrating how context and explanation are connected. This requires understanding of depth complexity, as well as sensitive and situated contextual accounts and experiences. For Mason (2005), in depth and rounded understandings of the diversity of participants rather than a broad understanding of surface patterns is more credible in qualitative inquiry. In Cohen *et al* (2005) this is called internal validity and has a greater significance in qualitative inquiry. In this study my aim was to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich nuanced and detailed data (Mason, 2005). My sample provided me with in-depth analysis of the phenomenon and rich insights into the research questions. The findings of this study provided a variety of definitions of quality assurance and multiple understanding of the researched phenomenon. Therefore, I feel confident to assert that detailed in-depth information from participants helped me to produce diversity, multiplicity, and nuances in the practices of quality assurance held by academics.

#### **2.9.4. Limitations**

Some of the limitations of the research methodology result from the characteristics of this research as a qualitative inquiry. Firstly, the interview data can be seen as involving responses shaped by respondents' identities and positionalities, and the excitement and anxiety that are possible emotional states during the interview process. I assumed that the participants made a valuable contribution to the research claims and to the final knowledge generated as social reality. On the other hand, the lack of significant critique from some of the participants could be viewed as limiting. The rationale for my choice of one academic from each of the different academic disciplines might be criticised as a limitation but this was the framework that provided an initial rationale for the choice of in-depth interviewees. This also meant that two departments were excluded from the research process as two participants dropped out. However, I accept that parallel themes emerged from the interviews, thus allowing comparisons and experiences of individual participants, which I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

The other limitation was my novice status as a researcher and being an insider in my own research context. My professional identity as an academic in my own institution influenced my research identity and the research process. Inevitably the power dynamics of my researcher identity and professional identity affected the social relations of the research. As I discussed in section (2.9), my familiarity with the context, my professional status as a colleague in the same work context have proven challenging. My concern was that my insider status did not guarantee that subjects would feel at ease and free to express themselves freely; some might be defensive to make comment of personal experience that might be critical of their workplace. Therefore, in some interviews my familiarity of the research context and the topic might be limiting as there may be a risk of losing some important information.

The other limitation of this research can be data analysis and the text produced. I did not conduct any post-meeting with the participants to evaluate the texts transcribed

and documented and discussing the meaning expressed. Therefore, I am the prime agent, control and the exercise of this process of turning the data into text. The limitation of my researcher identity as insider raises questions such as; context, ethical dilemmas arise which might be influential in reporting data. This is because of the issue of the subjective nature of researching your own practice, where there may be a lack of impartiality, researchers' interest in certain results being achieved and concerning objective view of data collected. The understandings expressed are always our own, not those of our participants. Perhaps this is inescapable. However, as I discussed in section (2.9) I tried to be reflexive and careful of such ethical dilemmas and issues as much as I can.

## **2.10. Summary**

This chapter has considered the ontological and epistemological position from which the research was conducted, as well as the related issue of its methodological standpoint. Following a constructivist and interpretive approach, phenomenology was adopted; these approaches were significant because they gave me access to rich in depth data that otherwise would have been hidden. These epistemological and ontological choices have influenced the process of the whole research: the framing of the research, the interview process, the data analysis and the research findings. The research process has been unique both in theoretical and practical outcomes. This uniqueness is reflected in issues such as situational variables and in ethical considerations, such as power dynamics, the uniqueness of each interview and each participant. As a consequence, although every step of this research was planned, the dynamic nature of qualitative research has been at the heart of this research as well.

Throughout the research process, I was mindful of research ethics, especially when I transcribe the narratives into texts. I tried to avoid issues of researcher power by empowering the participants and making their voices more significant. I have, through the research, attempted to embrace a reflexive position, avoiding both an overly self critical or over-confident attitude. The role of insider researcher has helped me to develop a greater understanding of the processes of carrying out research. I have become more aware of and

confident in the skills required to carry out research. Having reviewed the research methodology and research design, the next chapter moves on to next chapter discussed QA in wider and local policy context.

## **Chapter 3: Quality assurance: Wider and local policy contexts**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter explores the introduction of QA policies in HE in both international and local contexts. It examines the effects of increasing economic and political interest in HE and the introduction of QA in the 1990s, first in the UK and then in other EU nations. Given that supra-national organizations have placed a high priority on the development of QA policies in support of common international assessment frameworks (section 3.2), this chapter also explores the development and implications of the European dimension for QA in HE in non-European countries.

To this end, the following section (3.2) deals with the rise of the knowledge economy, massification, and the globalisation of HE. Section (3.3) addresses the impacts of the Bologna Process, and of QA policies and processes more broadly. Section (3.4) explores the transferability and harmonization of QA by examining the Turkish experience of QA in HE in particular. Section (3.5) discusses the first research question, pertaining to QA in North Cyprus and the impact of historical and political development; this section also discusses the impacts of the Bologna Process and national-level QA development in North Cyprus. Section (3.6) discusses QA implementation at EUL, and is supported by documentary analysis. Lastly, section (3.7) discusses the gaps resulting from the implementation of QA processes at EUL.

### **3.2. The knowledge economy, massification, and globalisation of higher education**

The first and strongest argument in favour of HE from a modernist perspective is that it plays an important role in both socio-cultural and economic development (Lim, 2001; UNESCO, 1998). The economic and social value of HE is subject to considerable debate, particularly in countries like the UK, the US and Australia, which receive the majority of international students. Mainly by strengthening their existing capacities and broadening

their offerings to meet the future needs of the emerging knowledge economy, European countries have witnessed considerably increased enrolment numbers since the 1990s, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe (Kohler, 2009). More pressing in the context of a knowledge economy, and given the ever-changing global economic forces affecting HE, is the globalisation of QA policy. According to Teichler (2004:13), the governments of these major 'knowledge exporting' countries are enormously active in shaping the rules of border-crossing commercial knowledge transfer in a way that maximizes their national gains. This has contributed to the sense of urgency surrounding the introduction of QA in HE more broadly, and more importantly, has helped to promote and make essential trans-national education policies, thereby globalising QA activities in an HE context, to some extent.

Globalisation has affected not only economic movement, but also academic systems (Altbach&Teichler, 2001). With the introduction of QA, partnerships have developed within countries, meant to contribute to the development of QA proposals and to achieve a better-coordinated pan-European QA system (HEFCE, 2006). The impact of globalisation and massification in HE has, however, led to diversified experiences of QA in HE. In particular, what has really driven the differentiation of QA within HE is the cross-border expansion and growing competition created by new forms of collaboration (Harvey, 2004; Knight, 2001; van der Wende&Westerheijden 2001). The underlying philosophy assumes that organizations such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] have produced codes of good practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards (Amaral, 2007). Some authors, such as Billing and Thomas (2000a) and Billing (2004), have offered a pessimistic view of such partnerships, improvement-oriented evaluations and pilot projects in developing countries.

Most research into the application of QA now incorporates diverse interests beyond the traditional social, economic and political factors. As a result, QA has become increasingly complex, and is applied to increasingly diverse national-level processes. This Western-dominated international trend may not fully consider certain nation-specific aspects, such as technical considerations, and political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions (Billing,

2004; Lemaitre, 2002; Temple & Billing 2003). Perhaps the goal of bridging the gap, and the reconstruction projects of QA, can be interpreted and experienced differently. We may, for instance, be well-served to consider how, and to what extent, international agencies influence a country's HE system. For some, QA processes in the age of globalisation have created more diversity and heterogeneity in HE. The complexity is best described by UNESCO: the gap between the industrially developed, the developing and in particular the least developed countries with regard to access to and resources for higher learning and research, which is already enormous, is becoming even wider (UNESCO, 1998). For example, Ala-Vähälä and Saarinen (2009), in discussing the HE context in Finland, have suggested that there are considerable differences between the policy statements and actual practices of QA organizations, noting significant conflict between the two. Ala-Vähälä and Saarinen (2009) have argued that QA organisations are typically government-funded, and are therefore politically more dependent on the government than on the universities themselves; indeed, the underlying obstacle of economic dependence may contribute to the ultimate failure of international QA organizations. On the other hand, Robertson (2005) has critiqued the policy agendas of both the OECD and the World Bank, focusing on the overall efficacy of homogenizing OECD member countries such as Turkey, Japan, the USA, or Finland, despite the huge differences in their histories, economies and political situations. In other words, the criticism lies in the implications of QA as it increasingly interpenetrates the cultural, economic, and political situations of any one nation.

The cooperation paradigm has become a competition paradigm, where rationales supporting QA activities have become more complex than the traditional duality of quality improvement and accountability would suggest (Amaral, 2007). There appears to be an implementation gap between international QA policies at the national and organizational levels, stemming from the limitations of the contexts in which the policy discourses are constructed. The harmonization and standardization of educational activities has presumably led to more diversity and heterogeneity between and across countries (Dale, 1999; 2005; Morley, 2003a).

Many have criticized QA implementation, and suggested that such policies have not contributed to better coordination of trans-national education (Knight, 2001; 2002). There are various arguments explaining the negative effects of the globalisation of QA policy in HE. For Lemaitre (2002) and Harvey (2004), QA represents political action, and the way in which QA policies are transferred and processed is biased toward the interests of politically-dominant countries; by extension, the consequent practices ignore the cultural and socio-economic parameters of the targeted countries. As Lemaitre (2002) demonstrates, globalisation allows the economic power of developed countries to dominate the culture, politics, and economic priorities of developing countries. As compelling as this view may be, it is clear where the evidence for such conclusions comes from. Morley (2003a) uses the term ‘colonisation’ for the development of QA systems across nations, and argues that what is ‘global is multivocal, heterogeneous and unpredictable’ (Morley, 2003a:1). For her, QA is the antithesis of the chaos created by the global expansion of HE. For Harvey (2004), globalisation is imperialism; similarly, for Dale (1999:8), QA is defined as ‘imperialism’ or ‘colonialism’, leading to the detailed criticism that external pressures and geographic influences have a variety of consequences and potential outcomes when inserted into national policy discourse. Green (1999) describes globalisation theory as uneven and its logical rigour and empirical grounding in policy borrowing as contributing to cultural diffusion. For him, cultural and contextual factors shape policy, and he suggests a convergence at the level of policy rhetoric and policy objectives. These issues relate to policy content, procedure, or intended outcome, and affect core institutions and the cultural values underlying them (Lim, 2001; Morley, 2003a).

### **3.3. Impact of the Bologna Process and quality assurance**

The Bologna Declaration initiated the promotion of European cooperation in QA. It set in motion a Europe-wide compatible and transparent QA system to accompany and structure the European HE space (Campbell and van der Wende, 2000; Kohler, 2009). The aim was to achieve greater compatibility and comparability within national HE systems in general, and to increase the international competitiveness of the European system of HE in particular (Harvey, 2004; Kohler, 2009). For the reasons discussed above, it was at first it



seen as a positive, and the Bologna Process seems to rely upon an underlying philosophy that looks for ‘cooperation, diversity, flexibility, reference points, creativity’ (Amaral, 2007:11). Nevertheless, the Bologna Declaration has not achieved the expected benefits in terms of QA evaluations at either national or organizational levels (Sadler, 2009b; Vidovich & Porter, 1999). An important aspect of QA, however, is that, with a multitude of HEIs operating within different economic, political and cultural environments, applying the same standard measures across the board may not always be feasible or advisable. Ozga (2000) has noted that the flows of resources are unequally distributed both within and across nation states, and the impacts of the resultant processes are therefore experienced differently within different populations, since ‘globalisation is not equally global’ (Ozga, 2000:59). Nor is it evident that these reforms have altered the way in which literature reviews are undertaken. It is not yet clear what the nature of these policies is, whereby education is more overtly tied into national level policies and dependent organisational cultures.

It is therefore crucial that researchers do not neglect the consequences of QA policy and its implementation at both the national and organizational levels. In addition to the overt interconnections, for Dale (1999) it is dubious to expect QA processes to be interpreted identically across multiple national contexts. Dale also argues that it might be simplistic to expect the effects of the globalisation of QA to be homogeneous. As Dale (1999) highlights, it is essential to recognize the significance of national societal and cultural effects, the prominence and importance of which have hardly been diminished by globalisation; the parameters of globalisation may alter the direction of state policies, but cannot negate or remove existing national peculiarities. Most countries have made an attempt to be part of this globalisation ethos, although there have been different, specific critiques made about the globalisation of education and knowledge. For instance, Dale (2005) has argued that national education systems are responsible for justifying and modifying their education systems. Dale (2005:122) discusses the features of policy decisions and processes at the national level, noting that they do not change the facts that:

- a) decisions are still taken at national level but this does not necessarily imply that is where power over decisions lies, b) existing forms continue apparently more or less

unchanged does not alter the fact that new forms, located at different scales, are starting to exist behind them, c) existing forms do not necessarily have the same meaning as they had previously, d) the nature and breadth of the areas across which international differences may emerge is narrowing under the KE.

According to Dale (2005), experience at the national level regarding the above disparities, and the values and purposes underpinning the knowledge economy, represent a considerable narrowing of the value of modernity. The equivalent parameters of transparency, standards, and evaluation structures are relative and restricted to when they are interpreted in national contexts. Both Morley (2003a) and Dale (1999) argue that policy borrowing, policy learning, and globalisation effects are diverse rather than homogeneous. For Dale, policy learning is likely to be present in policy transfer, and the compatibility of ‘policy learning with both traditional and globalized mechanisms’ means ‘examining how [policy learning] might fit into the different contexts’ (Dale, 1999:10). This can be traced back to the imperatives of social, cultural, and structural differences in the targeted countries, as noted by both Dale (1999; 2005) and Lim (2001). Attempts to transfer QA procedures used in the UK HE system to developing nations has proven challenging (Lim, 2001). These difficulties are detectable within Turkish HE, as will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.4. Transferability and harmonization of QA: the experience of Turkish HE**

Higher education QA measures were adopted in Turkey in the late 1990s, when the Turkish Ministry of Education and YÖK sought to adopt the criteria of the Sorbonne (1998) and Bologna (1999) Declarations in its HE quality management and accreditation systems (see Mızıkacı, 2003). Turkey became a signatory to the Bologna Declaration in 2001, although the legal effort to develop a national QA agency only came to fruition later, in 2005. Mızıkacı (2005) discusses the impact of the Bologna Process on Turkish HE, observing that the Bologna Process is generally appreciated but that the associated implementation instruments are, unfortunately, not yet sufficiently supported at the national level. Public universities in Turkey are largely dependent on government funding, whereas private

universities are autonomous and able to rely on their own financial resources. It can therefore be seen that, in private universities, implementation and adaptation of QA processes followed quickly, while state-funded universities first had to take advantage of the opportunity to open up new revenue streams, for instance through cooperative programmatic and research activities (Mızıkacı, 2005). The Turkish HE system is highly complex, and tracing the development of the key educational policies and reforms is a necessary task prior to advancing any arguments. At its core, the Turkish education system can be quite conservative and highly centralised in addressing managerial issues (Mızıkacı, 2005). This constitutes both a control and a constraint, and so questions of autonomy are inherent to Turkish HE.

As discussed above (Dale, 1999; 2005; Lim, 2001), the transfer of QA frameworks to external contexts often proves problematic. The experience of Turkish HE in adopting the UK model of QA has been similarly problematic. As Billing and Thomas (2000a) note, Turkish HE had not previously developed its own QA systems, measures for institutional accreditation, or external examining. As part of Turkey's integration process with the EU, some government agencies have been appointed to cooperate with European agencies, including the World Bank and British Council. Billing and Thomas (2000a) conducted a pilot project examining the transfer of UK QA policies to Turkish HE. This led Billing and Thomas (2000a) to identify critical concerns, such as cultural, structural, political, and technical issues. In addressing cultural issues, the authors raised the issue of familiarity and noted that the question of staff seniority affected the pace and evaluation of the study (Billing & Thomas, 2000a; Brennan & Shah, 2000). The most significant obstacle lay in the cultural and contextual differences, and factors at both the national and organisational levels suggested that these should have been addressed more explicitly (Billing & Thomas, 2000a; 2000b). The Turkish HE system is markedly different from its British counterpart. In the UK, academics have a considerable degree of autonomy in decision-making processes, while in Turkey this can be seen as an inherent source of tension (Billing & Thomas, 2000a, 2000b; see below). As pointed out by Billing and Thomas (2000a), the transferability of QA systems between nations requires consideration of a range of issues, including the cultural dimension and questions of the relative autonomy enjoyed by the

national education system of the targeted country.

Billing and Thomas (2000b) provided detailed data evaluating QA practices based on a modified UK model as applied to Turkish HE, arguing for a net positive impact on the assessment and evaluation of teaching and learning quality. The academics who took part in this project recognised the importance of internal university QA and of staff development for any quality improvement initiatives (Billing & Thomas, 2000b). Building on this insight, the project has also raised significant issues to be addressed in any national level QA process conducted in Turkey, including: time-scale, cultural and structural differences, and communication difficulties. Billing and Thomas (2000b) show that, all too often, the economic situation, the culture of the adopting country, and the practical, socio-economic, and cultural dimensions are ignored. The manner in which QA is imported and interpreted in the adopting countries differs significantly. This is also highlighted by Lim (2001), who reported that in developing or low-income countries, the lack of facilities, lack of staff development, and lack of academic freedom in institutional structuring contribute to the demanding circumstances.

Another international research project touching upon Turkish HE, a longitudinal case study conducted by Hergüner and Reeves (2000), examined the relationship between national culture and corporate culture. Total quality management was adopted as a QA assessment system, but the authors concluded that attempts to adapt QA systems from other countries might introduce unforeseen difficulties, and that total quality management systems should be capable of being adapted to the cultural patterns of that country, rather than introducing pressures and attempting to impose organisational change on national cultural patterns (Hergüner and Reeves, 2000).

Borahan and Ziarati (2002) have evaluated the developments and impacts of QA on Turkish HE, noting that, unlike is observed in developed countries, there is an urgent need to establish a QA system and forms of control in developing and newly industrialised countries. In an extensive study based on the tradition of developing a quality criteria checklist, Borahan and Ziarati (2002) developed an International Standardization

Organization [ISO] metric, similar to the total quality management [TQM] model. The authors held a positive view of the potential of TQM to assess QA in HE. Borahan and Ziarati (2002) mainly focus on the development of an ISO-based approach to TQM. The TQM application of ISO seeks to identify key criteria in quality assessment and control in HE. Some of the questions were critical, such as:

- Can the existing practices or models of quality systems or TQM be exported? Or are they culture-bound?
- Can a quality assurance and control model used in any country be implemented in Turkey? Or should we consider a model being used in a newly industrialised country which is at a development stage similar to Turkey, such as South Korea, which has recently become a member of the OECD and has established a major textile industry? (Borahan and Ziarati, 2002:918)

Mızıkacı (2003) also used the UK TQM assessment method in discussing the challenges of adapting TQM to the assessment methods currently used in Turkish HE, arguing that the transformation of the industry-based concept may lead to improved ability to evaluate and assess institutional activities. She also argued, however, that the applicability and transferability of key quality management concepts should be considered by educational organisations, adding that ‘the concepts of ISO 9000 cause misapplications in educational institutions adapting these quality assurance standards’ (Mızıkacı 2003:104). Mızıkacı (2003) had previously criticised this management-based assessment model, as its implementation is seen to rely on control and direction by management processes and recording systems in the educational context. Mızıkacı (2003) also indicates that the use of ISO 9000 standards has led to conflict in the implementation of certain major areas, such as course structure—including design, practice, materials, and assessment—the teaching and learning environment, and programme evaluation. From a post-structuralist vantage-point, and supporting the arguments made above, Morley and Rassool (2000) and Morley (2003a) have stated that TQM is derived from an industrial model, and experience has shown that adopting a policy borrowed from a business environment to be implemented in an educational setting introduces unique problems. Morley and Rassool (2000) query the model’s positivistic understandings, its discursive impacts, and its ultimate effect on educational activities. Morley and Rassool (2000) have indicated that quality needs to

include consideration of equity and social values, and therefore should be contextualised in relation to aspects such as community needs, social formations, and employment conditions.

Turkish HE has tried to follow the QA initiatives contained in the Bologna Process, although implementation has proven challenging. Mızıkacı (2005) documents the positive impacts of the Bologna Process but concludes that, although the response by YÖK to the imperatives of integration and mobility have been positive and supportive, the international dimension of HE mobility is in its early stages, and is developing fairly slowly. Mızıkacı (2005:77) also expresses concern that Turkish HE:

[Has] adopted European and international mobility schemes unreservedly. Many universities naturally require more time and resources to complete their preparation period, and striking regional disparities remain in both quality and funding. For example, not all universities have balanced commitment to both teaching and research; teaching is more emphasized in the majority of institutions.

Mızıkacı also identifies a lack of clarity in the process; for example:

- Clearly-defined national policies and their implementation regarding internationalisation and mobility are unavailable, all the more so in light of globalisation's ever changing constraints and opportunities;
- There has been no observable increase in the state budget allocations for higher education and research for the last decade;
- There is a lack of systematic data collection on mobility and internationalisation issues in general (Mızıkacı, 2005:77).

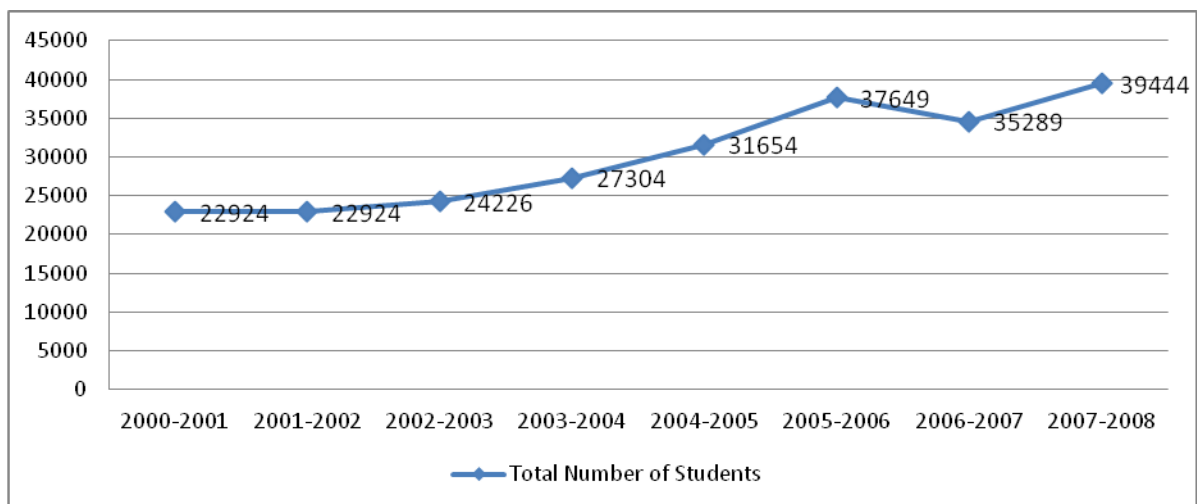
There are serious concerns surrounding transferring and totalising QA in the educational settings of different national contexts. International QA proposals have faced challenges of cultural inheritance, socio-economic parameters, lack of facilities and funding of national level contexts (Dale, 1999; Lim, 2001; Robertson, 2005). The following section examines the introduction of QA processes in North Cyprus HE. The discussion notes the political and economic motives behind the urgent introduction of QA, and focuses on the influence of the Bologna Process at the national level.

### 3.5. Quality assurance in North Cyprus

#### 3.5.1. The impact of historical and political developments in HE in North Cyprus

Since the foundation of the Republic of North Cyprus in 1983, the development of its HE sector has included political and economic motives, and particularly so since the early 1990s. The pace of expansion of access to HE in the nation has increased since 2004. This growth has been due to the attractiveness of its universities, derived from its political position as of 1 May 2004, when Cyprus became a member of the EU. The EU-backed Annan Plan brought the two communities of the island together as a member state of the EU, known as the ‘United Cyprus Republic’ (Arslan&Güven, 2007). Although North Cyprus—the northern part of the island—was barred from entering the EU in 2004, enrolment levels have nevertheless increased since that date. The status of Cyprus as a former British colony, from 1914 until 1960 (Panayiotopoulos, 1999:35), has meant that most educational policies and regulations in North Cyprus remain in line with the British system. In addition, the medium of instruction in all universities is English, which is a prime motivating factor for students to seek admission to one of the universities in North Cyprus. Figure 2 shows the increase in the number of students at the six universities in North Cyprus according to years.

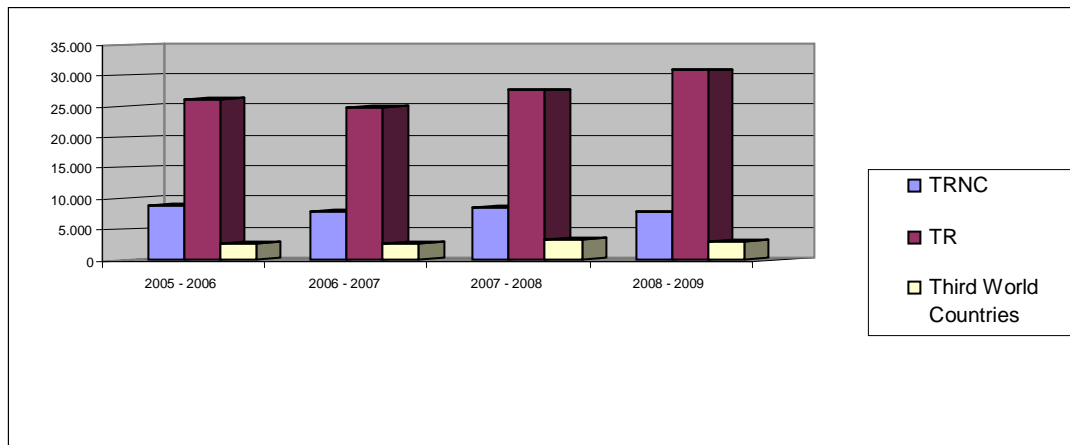
**Figure 2: Increase in the number of the students according to the years**



Source: TRNC State Planning and Organisation ([www.devplan.org](http://www.devplan.org))

In addition to the above motives, there are other factors contributing to widening access to HE in North Cyprus. One of the most important factors has been the increased general demand for access to HE institutions, both in Turkey and in North Cyprus, driven by an increase in secondary school graduates in Turkey (Mızıkacı, 2003). Due to actions taken at the national level, the foundation of private and public universities has increased still further from the early 1990s. The demand for higher education in North Cyprus showed a considerable increase by the 1990, mainly from Turkey (see Katircioğlu, 2010). By 2007, there were six universities accredited by YÖK and YÖDAK. In the early 2000s, the increase in enrolment levels was enormous, with students coming mainly from Turkey, with others arriving from developing countries. Figure 3 underscores the current situation of HEIs in North Cyprus, as they comprise the main foreign destination for Turkish students, who now comprise nearly 70% (n=26,202) of the overall student population at the six universities in North Cyprus.

**Figure 3: The nationality of higher education students in North Cyprus from 2005.**



Source: TRNC State Planning and Organisation ([www.devplan.org](http://www.devplan.org))

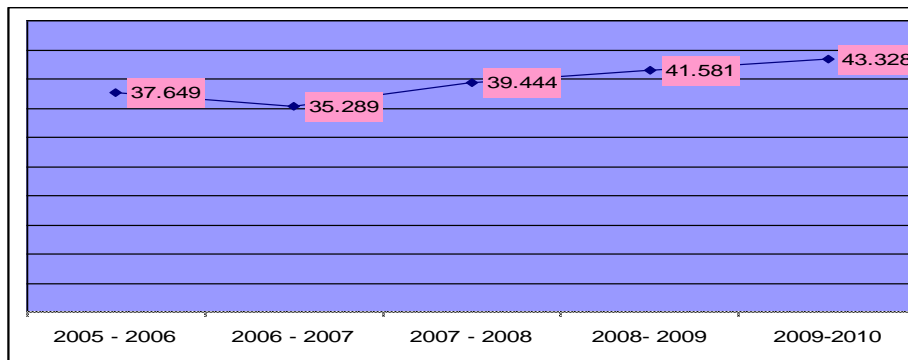
TRNC: Turkish Republic of North Cyprus

TR: Turkish Republic



This is important, as economic growth in North Cyprus is largely driven by the HE sector. The continued growth of the HE sector has both political and economic implications. Currently, the economic gain realized from the country's universities is enormous. The total number of students in the six universities is estimated at 43,000, with a minimum financial input from each student of between US \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year. Figure 4 presents the total number of students in the six universities of North Cyprus since 2005.

**Figure 4: The total number of students enrolled at higher education institutions in North Cyprus, 2005–2010**



Source: TRNC State Planning and Organisation ([www.devplan.org](http://www.devplan.org))

In North Cyprus the tourism and higher education sectors are catalysts for economic growth both being the primary source of revenue on the island (see Katircioğlu, 2010). The higher education sector contributes to the economy of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus [TRNC] (Katircioğlu, 2010). Indeed universities shoulder a responsibility of providing economic prosperity in North Cyprus. As a result, the HEIs operating in North Cyprus are now more responsive to the needs and pressures created by increased participation. This has been accompanied by the establishment of new programmes in new fields, the establishment of post-graduate programmes, and the alteration and adaptation of existing programmes to better address emerging needs.

### **3.5.2. The impact of the Bologna process on the development of national QA**

Due to recent initiatives, such as inclusion in the EU and continued massification, HEIs in North Cyprus have accepted the intervention of the Bologna Process (1999) and its aim of

creating a European Higher Education Area [EHEA] by 2010. The island of Cyprus, including North Cyprus, is in ‘geographic Europe’, and Turkish Cypriots are committed to adopting international HE standards, and particularly those standards set out by the European education system and the Bologna Process (Arslan&Güven, 2007). The Bologna Process recognises the value of coordinated reforms, compatible systems, and common action, which has intensified attempts to develop QA and import or otherwise introduce international standards and criteria to North Cyprus HE. A Higher Education Act, passed in 2005 (Higher Education Act 65/2005), reformed the national framework within which HEIs operate. The act enshrined YÖDAK as the governing body overseeing HE in North Cyprus. Within the act, the Bologna Process (Act 65, Article 2) was referred to explicitly:

The Bologna Process gives an account of the development of Higher Education Standards after the Sorbonne Declaration (1998), the Bologna Declaration (1999), the Salamanca Declaration (2001) and the Berlin Conference of Ministries of Education (2003) in the light of the Magna Charta Universitatum (1998).

At the national level, this act was related to the Bologna Process. The above quote indicates that YÖDAK was making an explicit attempt to adhere to the principles of the Bologna Process. As is discussed below, however, other political factors intervened to constrain how QA could be developed and implemented in this context.

The Bologna Process and Cypriot inclusion in the EU in 2004 brought difficult political disputes to the fore in Cyprus. In 2007, the Ministry of National Education and Culture and YÖDAK applied for membership to the Bologna Process, and requested the inclusion of North Cyprus’ universities in the EHEA (Arslan&Güven, 2007). Due to political disputes, QA commitments and the Bologna Process have never been legalised or formally enacted. North Cyprus is not recognized as an independent political entity by any member of the Bologna Process other than Turkey and, as such, its claims to nationhood remain contested. In addition, North Cyprus is not eligible to join the Bologna Process under the criteria defined in Berlin in 2003. It is therefore not a member of any international intergovernmental organisations.

HEIs in North Cyprus have faced political obstacles, with those at the international level

only being part of the story. Founded in 1979, Eastern Mediterranean University [EMU] is the oldest and largest university in North Cyprus. It was the EMU which represented the universities of North Cyprus in the European Commission Parliament on 4 October, 2007, at a meeting entitled, ‘The results of the Bologna Process’; the rector of EMU was the TRNC representative at this meeting. A member of the European Commission, Karin Resetaris, noted that the Bologna Process had been a success, but that both North Cyprus and Kosovo had been excluded from the process for political reasons. Resetaris added that, if the applications of these two nations had been evaluated by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education [ENQA], it would be clear that their exclusion was not a reflection of the quality of education they provided, or any quality-related matter (ABHaber.com, 2007).

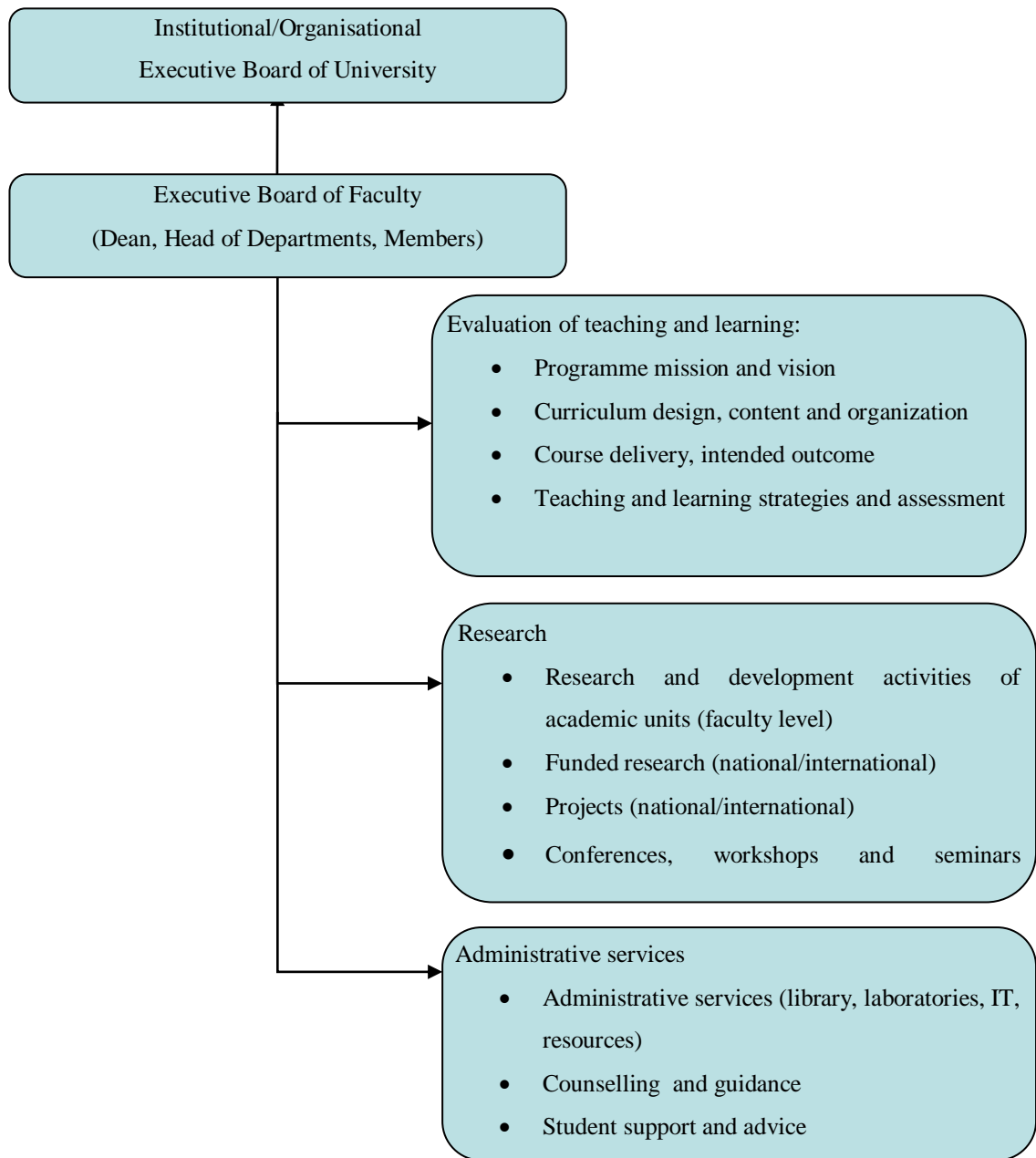
Owing purely to political disputes, the Bologna Process and its operationalisation have not been accepted and adopted at a legal or practical level in North Cyprus. At the national level, due in part to exclusion from the Bologna Process, there has been relative silence regarding QA. There is no legally-constituted QA policy at the national level, nor is there an independent body or national agency capable of developing, enacting, or enforcing QA policies. This has left North Cyprus HEIs free to follow individual approaches to QA at the institutional level.

In 2010, with the appointment of Prof.Dr.Hasan Ali Bıçak as president of YÖDAK, there were attempts at closer cooperation with the international organisations of the EU. Despite the strong opposition and political disputes and embargos in place to bar North Cyprus from participating in international activities on educational developments, the HEIs in North Cyprus have been cooperating with some international agencies with respect to QA. Since March 2010, some international organisations have visited universities in North Cyprus. The current role of these international organisations is to provide information and guidelines for a QA evaluation framework. These visits are in the form of workshops, conferences, and seminars, held at different universities (see Appendix IV for examples). These organisations arrange their visits when individual universities request an external review of individual programmes. For instance, on 25–26 May 2010, Peter Williams, the

former president of ENQA, held a conference on European Guidelines for Quality Assurance at EUL, as well as a general conference at YÖDAK to provide universities with guidance concerning QA procedures and ENQA principles.

### **3.6. Implementing QA at EUL**

As described in Section (3.5.2), an ordinance developed as a result of the Bologna Process also served as an important point of departure for QA at EUL in 2006. Figure 5 shows the resultant QA framework.

**Figure 5: QA framework at the organisational level**

Source: Adapted from the information obtained from the [www.eul.edu.tr](http://www.eul.edu.tr) (2006) (see section 3.6.1)

All of the reasons mentioned above, including HE massification in North Cyprus and adaptations undertaken at HEIs related to the Bologna Process, have contributed to varying degrees to the establishment of this QA framework. EUL has come to terms with the issue of QA, as have other universities in North Cyprus, to differing degrees and extents. The establishment of formal QA processes at EUL was the responsibility of its Quality

Assurance Committee, established in 2006; to date, however, this body has not functioned at an institutional level.

### **3.6.1. Quality assurance processes and related documentation in EUL**

This section describes QA at EUL, and is supported by an examination of various EUL texts. These documents are: Quality Assurance as followed in FAE; and, Quality Assurance Evaluations and Proposals, FEAS. These are presented as Appendices V and VI. The texts, detailing QA processes, have been developed at the faculty level. At EUL, QA processes are expected to facilitate improvements in educational quality in three core evaluation areas (see Figure 5, and appendices). QA processes at EUL focus on:

1. Programme mission and vision
2. Curriculum design objectives and organization
3. Institutional facilities and support
4. Laboratories and computing facilities
5. Research development and innovation
6. Student support and guidance

At EUL, QA processes are expected to comprehensively review all matters related to the above areas. In practice, however, each area is regulated by different texts, schemes, and procedures within each faculty. These include internal decisions on: curriculum design and organisation, laboratories and computing facilities, and research development and innovation. In contrast, QA efforts pertaining to the final area of focus, ‘student support and guidance’, are tracked by different university units, such as the Dean of Students’ office, the public relations office, and student counselling. The institutional structures through which QA is to be conducted at EUL are complex and, as is explored in the next section, subject to diverse implementation methods at the faculty level.

### **3.6.2. Implementation of QA at EUL**

The executive board of the EUL guides faculty deans and gives them the authority and autonomy to conduct reviews and establish QA practices in an attempt to align their practices with the framework set out by the Bologna Process. Both the Dean and the Executive Board of each faculty are responsible for planning, coordinating, and following up on the QA processes. Each faculty conducts and implements QA processes through internal mechanisms, moving forward in ways that reflect their own priorities, their own interpretations of QA, and their own interpretations of what it might mean to be in alignment with the Bologna Process. Each faculty is therefore responsible for the production of official documentation laying out detailed objectives and guidelines on the QA processes observed by their faculty. As a result, various elements of the QA processes and reviews are said to include identification and verification efforts, to ensure that existing programmes are meeting their objectives and institutional goals—the maintenance and improvement of academic standards.

To illustrate this more clearly, this section presents an analysis of exemplar documents selected from two different faculties at EUL: the QA texts from the Faculty of Architecture and Engineering and the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. Excerpts from these are presented as Appendices V and VI. The documents provided at the faculty level define the core areas of QA processes and identify the principles and requirements corresponding to each area listed in section 3.6.1.

The FAE and the FEAS were chosen to be presented here for two reasons: first, they are the two biggest faculties at EUL, each hosting multiple subject areas and departments; and, second, their subject areas have different demands and characteristics. The FAE, which consists of five departments (see Appendix I), addresses subjects largely characterised by technical knowledge, and employs educational methods typified by experimental practices and field work. The nature of knowledge in the six departments of FEAS (see Appendix I), varies across the different social sciences, but the faculty is generally more concerned with qualities, understanding and interpretation.

### **3.6.3. Analysis of Faculty Texts: Programme mission and vision**

In each of the selected faculties, the programme mission and vision include opening new undergraduate and post-graduate programmes in line with the mission and vision of the university (Appendix V, article a; Appendix VI, article I). The evaluation also considers adapting the programmes and their content to be more closely aligned with the Bologna Process (see sections below).

### **3.6.4. Faculty Texts: Curriculum design objectives and organization**

The official QA text for each faculty is described as an exercise conducted to assess whether the programmes meet their stated educational objectives and expected outcomes, with the purpose of improving the quality of the programmes and enhancing both teaching and students' learning. As discussed in the Conceptual Framework provided above, and as can be seen from appendices V and VI, QA reflects the procedures associated with standardising teaching and learning outcomes, and provides transparency in curriculum design and organisation, objectives, and expected learning outcomes. The QA processes described in faculty texts, however, review the mission, vision, desired objectives, and expected outcomes of the programmes in each faculty *differently*. For example, in FEAS (Appendix VI), the proposals relating to mission, vision, and curriculum design aspire to upgrade their programmes by bringing them into alignment with the Bologna Process; it is explicitly stated in the document that curricula are to be aligned with the Bologna Process. As outlined in the mission statement of FEAS:

Extensive efforts have been made to elaborate the course outline for each course, and content is expected to be in line with the BOLOGNE criteria and in accordance with the imperatives of accreditation procedures. The importance of course outlines, as documents identifying the course's aims, elaborating the subjects to be taught according to the above mentioned objectives and fitting the course to the prevailing academic calendar, should be emphasized and attempt to cover all courses offered. For this purpose, a template laying out essential points to be integrated into a given outline should be examined, with additions and alterations made on an as needed basis (Appendix VI, article III).



Conversely, the FAE text (Appendix V) is concerned primarily with external and professional accreditation. This includes gaining accreditation of the departments or faculty, with the goal of being able to provide transfer students and faculty academics with recognition of diplomas for Masters and PhD programmes. This is the FAEs principle strategy for upgrading their curriculum and aligning it with international standards. This can be seen in the articles excerpted below:

o. The curriculum is to be updated consistently, keeping in mind evolving ABET, YOK, PEC and MUDEK requirements. Best programs, with chosen courses satisfying such requirements, should be developed. ABET-granted curricula, for instance in EMU and METU, can be used as references for this purpose.

q. Accreditation efforts should be continued, with MUDEK and ABET pursued for selected departments only said department has attained PEC accreditation.

Sections on curriculum design provide descriptive indicators of the evaluation criteria for teaching and learning in each faculty. As can be seen from the texts, QA processes require a review of the curriculum, including its intended objectives, assessment of the learning outcomes, and evaluation of the entire body of information. However, as identified above and illustrated in the Appendices, the two faculties have given priority to different concerns in upgrading their programmes. In FAE, the curriculum design and objectives focus on gaining accreditation for the faculty by both Turkish and international agencies (Appendix V, sections o & q), whereas the FEAS text states that the curriculum, course contents, and objectives should be brought in line with the Bologna criteria (Appendix VI, section III). Toward this end, FEAS goes so far as to require all of its courses adhere to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

### **3.6.5. Faculty Texts: Institutional facilities and support**

Quality assurance at EUL also considers the adequacy and effectiveness of administrative services, including the resources and facilities provided, which are known to be influential in teaching and students' learning. The QA scheme evaluates facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and access to research, and field work activities, all to ensure effective

teaching, research, and the continued development of innovative activities. In FAE, this is evaluated via periodic mentoring and lectures (Appendix V, section l & m), as the programmes require field work, including industrial visits (Appendix V, article n).

In contrast, FEAS places increased importance on social and collegiate aspects, such as faculty meetings and colloquia to discuss departmental priorities for future overall policies (Appendix VI, article IV). The aim of such efforts is to achieve stronger interoperability of rules and regulations at the faculty level.

#### **3.6.6. Faculty Texts: Laboratories and computing facilities**

The sufficient provision of quality technological resources is promoted by each faculty, but reflective of the different priorities held by each. FAE places increased importance on the administrative and technical facilities utilized in experiments, research, and laboratory services (Appendix V, section i). In contrast, other faculties, such as FEAS, place increased importance on issues relating to student comfort, pedagogical approaches, and the social aspects of education (Appendix VI, article III). This shows how faculties may choose to emphasise different aspects and approaches to QA; sometimes, as in FAE, the main focus will be on resource allocation, while in other instances, as in FEAS, social aspects are given more weight in teaching and learning.

#### **3.6.7. Faculty Texts: Research development and innovation**

Quality assurance also aspires to deal with professional development, research, and innovation. As suggested in section (1.5.3), QA can incorporate aspects of professional development. At EUL, these aspects are evident to varying degrees at the faculty level. In FAE, QA processes are aimed at the retention of qualified faculty members (Appendix VI, article V). For example, QA is stated to help in preparing professionals by allowing some proposals, such as those relating to research and professional development, to be initiated within QA processes (Appendix V, article g). Academic performance evaluations and student evaluations are part of broader QA evaluation efforts (Appendix V, section r).

FEAS also sees professional development and research as part of the QA process, as part of efforts to foster research development and innovation aiming at increasing participation in research initiatives at the faculty level. Organising academic colloquia, conferences and symposia is seen as a strong motivator for departmental and faculty level improvements (Appendix VI, article V).

This analysis provides insight on the development of QA processes via the texts produced at the faculty level. The development of QA in relation to the Bologna Process, and specifically efforts to create an institution-wide text detailing QA processes for EUL, has been limited. As a result, we see that QA processes can be taken up in very different ways at the faculty level. This illustrates the situated nature of QA processes, and how professionals might have situated practices as discussed in the Conceptual Framework (Eraut, 2000; 2004).

### **3.7. Potential implementation gap in QA processes in the EUL**

Given the potential for different views and approaches to QA, the implementation of these measures might vary widely within different faculties, with consequently different but nonetheless important influences on QA practices. In the face of such variations, this study will first map views on QA, its processes, and practices, within the specific context of EUL.

The documentary analysis provides initial insights in response to research question two, on the development of QA at EUL. This has shown the potential for a proliferation of variation in QA development at the faculty level. The documentary analysis has also shown what QA processes might aspire to, and some of the differences in QA texts that might emerge, even just within different faculties at the same university.

Based on the brief review of faculty documents, it is evident that although there is some consensus about QA processes, there is the potential for practices to diverge dramatically, a tendency which would only be exacerbated by the presence of starkly different faculties. The absence of additional institution-wide texts specifying the exact focal points and

processes of QA has resulted in variations in implementation, including in curriculum design and organisation, and in descriptions of QA at the faculty level. In the core areas of teaching and learning, research, and professional development, some of these differences have been discussed in reference to the two faculties mentioned here, the FAE and the FEAS. Thus, in contrast to the assumption that QA processes might provide standardised benchmarks across different programmes and faculties, as described in section (3.6.1), this analysis has suggested the potential for a much more fractured and complex set of practices. An exploration of the experiences of academic staff with QA processes will further illuminate this potential for divergence between prescribed practice and practical implementation, and will be addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

## **Chapter 4: Academics views and understandings of QA in EUL**

### **4.1. Overview**

In addressing my second research question, the perspective of EUL academics was explored, particularly with regard to their understanding of the QA process. This chapter presents an analysis of the interview data with a purposive sample of respondents, with the aim of identifying different academics' perspectives on QA processes at EUL. Interview excerpts are presented to illustrate the views and experiences of academics, and to identify the impacts and influence of QA on academic practices—teaching and learning in particular. Although there may be no universal definition of QA, there is considerable agreement that QA as a mechanism is meant to ensure a certain level of standardisation by means of evaluative indicators (Ozga, 2000; Seto & Wells, 2007). The literature also suggests that, while QA might be defined through certain standards or key dimensions, it cannot be made completely transparent or standardised, as it is not a unitary concept (see section 1.5.1).

This chapter also attempts to provide a situated account of QA as a contextualised phenomenon, rather than describing it in technical or schematic terms. An important aspect of looking closely at what academic staff do with QA processes involves tapping into the diversity of meanings and situated decisions made regarding the understanding of academic QA processes within an institutional context.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section (4.2) deals with the QA process as characterised by standards, transparency, and quality in teaching and learning. The second section (4.3) summarises the perspectives of academics regarding QA as it is associated with the provision of technological resources and facilities. The third section (4.4) provides an overview of academics' conceptualisation of quality HE provision, defined as educating students to be professionals. The final section of this chapter (4.5) provides an overview of the academics' perspective that 'research' is a key to achieving quality HE provision. Section (4.6) provides an overview of the summary of this chapter.

## **4.2. Quality assurance process and practice: standards and transparency in teaching and learning**

The interviewees suggested that QA was readily recognised as involving the upholding of certain standards and aiming for greater transparency in teaching and learning. This was strongly underscored by the academics, as two-thirds (12 out of 18) of interviewees defined QA generally as a systematic way to evaluate quality through objectives, goals, and procedures.

As discussed in the Conceptual Framework and Chapter 3 (3.6.1), the QA processes at EUL are bounded by some regulatory descriptions of the standardisation of teaching and learning delivery, including curriculum design and organisation, learning outcomes, and assessment (see Appendices V and VI). In my study, there was evidence that academics associate QA processes with following the prescribed criteria and established standards in teaching and learning, such as course outlines, exams, assessments, and evaluations. The research findings suggested that the documented principles in official texts are perceived as being somewhat beneficial in promoting quality in teaching and learning. Among the 18 academics interviewed, 12 suggested that QA is effective insofar as it serves to enable certain goals and objectives in teaching and learning.

During the interviews, academics highlighted the fact that the QA process is perceived as important, making numerous comments about its benefits in achieving certain standards and levels of transparency in teaching and learning. This suggests that certain principles involved in the QA process were accepted as means of achieving improved quality in teaching and learning. For example, a senior lecturer in FCS highlighted the importance of QA by noting that ‘creating a common level of education, common expectations in a course could be an advantage’. Academics specifically acknowledge the importance of making such expectations clear and standardised at the institutional level. An FCS department head explained that ‘goals and objectives...should be standardised, in order for everybody to understand them’. A similar perspective has been reported in Mızıkacı (2003), in the summary of her study on quality and quality assessment systems in Turkish HE.

Mızıkacı(2003:98) argued that it is important to make the ‘aims and objectives clear to all participants’. An assistant professor in FEAS expanded on a personal view of the meaning of QA, noting that:

Quality assurance is managing quality in any production. It could also mean educating students with high standards of everything. Their education must be [of a] standard with European education, and they should have good resources, computers, internet, labs.

The responses of academics indicate that, overall, QA should reflect the notion of benchmarking in quality HE provision. Some academics held strong views on how teaching and learning could be standardised. For example, the interviews exposed a range of perspectives on the impacts of following strict criteria in teaching and learning as part of QA processes. Although many participants—more than half—strongly supported the importance and necessity of having certain standards and criteria, they noted this might be overstated or might have negative influences on academic autonomy. For some, institutional control over teaching and learning was perceived as unnecessary, impossible, and as something that might undermine autonomy regardless of the potential benefits of different approaches to teaching and learning. A senior lecturer from FEAS argued, for instance, that teaching processes should not be subject to an overseeing authority, saying:

There may be opposition to the idea of trying to reach a common standard...I think it is impossible; it is unnecessary. And it is not even a desirable thing; every lesson should be different. In fact, there are benefits for the students if their lessons, and their lecturers, have different approaches to the teaching because then students may gain different aspects from different lecturers...An over-standardisation may not always be desirable and quality assurance may lead in negative directions.

This concern echoes Sadler’s (2005) observation that the concepts of ‘criteria’ and ‘standards’ are often conflated, and that professional judgments made by teachers remain subjective. Sadler (2005) argued the importance of following certain criteria, while acknowledging that criteria on their own cannot and do not constitute standards. This relates to the range of potential meanings which can be attached to QA; indeed, further arguments made by Sadler (2005) are convincing, as he states that, ‘standards based on tacit knowledge commonly exist in unarticulated form’ (2005:192). His argument reflects the

importance of professionals' tacit knowledge and evaluations. The participants in my study also underscored the importance of professional knowledge in evaluating teaching and learning outcomes.

Interviews also suggested that standardisation of teaching and learning might ignore some educational issues and neglect the communicative aspects of teaching and learning. For instance, a senior lecturer in FAS acknowledged the benefits of certain standards, structures to describe courses, and methods of course delivery, adding that quality should be standard and persistent while, at the same time, also acknowledging the limits of standardisation given the existence of different teaching styles:

It's a bit difficult to explain because everybody has different teaching styles...Despite all the differences, the quality should be standardised and in [future] years it should be standardised as well. It shouldn't change from [one] year to another.

This concern is further supported by Sadler (2009a), as he highlights the importance of qualitative judgments of professionals in specific educational contexts. As mentioned in the above respondent's quote, it is important to consider different teaching styles. Sadler (2009a) also argues that, in an HE context, differences in standards are and should be defended as an academic right.

### **4.3. Institutional facilities and resources**

Another theme to emerge from the interviews is that quality in teaching and learning is strongly associated with the adequate provision of technological resource and facilities. More than half (n=10) of study participants expressed this view, and added that the quality of the institution was closely related to resources such as laboratories, libraries, IT services, and internet access. As an assistant professor from FAST suggested:



We need to have tools to do lectures. For example: projection machines, videos, maybe even each department, like we are related with Science, should have video cameras. So you can go into nature, go into agricultural farms, take videos and show them to your students. This can be good.

A senior lecturer in FEAS similarly described QA as pertaining to quality in facilities and services:

[In] terms of physical facilities, classroom facilities, technological facilities, and then also, on the administrative side, ensuring that everything is working properly and the overall service has been provided properly to a certain standard.

These two excerpts suggest that, for most academics, good material resources are essential to ensuring quality teaching and learning outcomes. Similar points were made by Borahan and Ziarati (2002) in their extensive report on QA at Doğu University, in Turkey. Their project developed a management strategy that involved a checklist to ensure material resources were used in the most effective manner possible, to achieve academic objectives and quality targets as efficiently and consistently as possible. Their contextually-based criteria for sorting learning resources rated the following: learning resources (including libraries and IT), laboratories, all physical resources (whether they are sufficient in number and availability), whether students are provided with open access and independent learning materials, and a qualified and experienced academic staff and technical support staff (see Borahan and Ziarati, 2002). Similar arguments are made by Mızıkacı (2003); in her research, she has identified the adequacy of physical resources as an important factor in assessing quality in HE contexts. The importance and impacts of technological resources and facilities on quality HE provision is explored in more detail in Chapter 5 (section 5.3).

#### **4.4. Quality HE provision: educating students as professionals**

This study found that academics valued QA as a means of supporting the development of particular qualities in their students, including educating them as professionals. They expressed the view that the professional qualities of students and success at instilling post-graduate skills were indicative of the quality of education. Seven participants, from FAE,

FAS, and FEAS, respectively, noted the importance of employment prospects and job placement for recent graduates. A senior FAS lecturer went so far as to describe the employment of graduates as being a source of pride for both teacher and institution, saying that, ‘The graduates will find jobs easily, and me as a teacher [I am] also proud to be working in and contributing to that institution.’

Some respondents suggested that students should not only be educated in various disciplines, but that they should also expect to complete their studies having been equipped with ample inter-personal and employment skills. In a UK context, Morley and Aynsley (2007) similarly noted that employers placed emphasis on graduates interpersonal/team skills and core skills such as communication. A senior lecturer in FAS argued that:

Teaching in the English Language Teaching Department, from the teachers’ perspective, the quality assurance for me [means] to educate students in such a way that when they graduate they are going to be fully equipped with the skills and the knowledge they are going to need in order to become an English teacher.

Many of the findings presented here agree with past studies, which have argued that quality HE provision means quality education for students, in every aspect. Indeed quality of teaching and learning might have different meanings in HE contexts. Building on this insight, Randall (2002:188) has suggested that ‘the key to reform is re-designing the system around the users’. As part of this proposed reconfiguration the responsibility for quality is dispersed, so that every institution is responsible for its graduates. As Botas (2008) has argued, concept of quality in HE is viewed as meeting the needs of consumers; he added that if teaching and learning is not what students are expecting, then quality teaching cannot be established (Botas, 2008). Morley (2003b:80) offers a similar view:

In the arena of higher education there has been the introduction of an array of mechanisms, including learning contracts, guidelines, assessment criteria, learning outcomes, core skills, all of which in various ways attempt to systematize and codify student/teacher interactions.

The importance of core skills and good practice as an indicator of quality HE provision was identified by Morley (2003a:143) elsewhere, as she has argued that ‘good practice’

constitutes quality teaching methods such as group work, problem solving and interactive approaches. These arguments echo Sadler (2009a), who suggested the importance of equipping students with holistic evaluative insights and skills, all of which will contribute to students' post-graduation skill sets. He has also highlighted the importance of skills gained as a result of HE, arguing that such skills should provide:

[O]pportunities for students to demonstrate sophisticated cognitive abilities, integration of knowledge, complex problem solving, critical opinion, lateral thinking and innovative action (Sadler, 2009a:160).

Mızıkacı has also offered insight into the criteria used to evaluate quality in HE, focusing on identifying the importance of providing 'students with transferable knowledge and skills' (2003:98). In the context of EUL, analysis of the interview data has shown that academics not only expect, but make additional efforts to educate students in subject-specific areas, in addition to providing them with the expected employment skills. A professor from FAE described the teaching and learning approaches in place at EUL by saying, 'It should be a problem-based education...[it] should be provided as a whole, not discrete, and the best solution, possibly, will be the problem-based one.' A senior lecturer from FAE raised a similar concern regarding the education system in place at EUL. In her view, memorisation and rote learning is not a proper system for educating engineering students, and she was direct in saying, 'I like students to do practical work'.

The interviews revealed numerous expectations of quality. Participants from FAE and FAST highlighted the importance of 'practical skills' and 'problem-solving'. In interviews, academics in faculties focusing on scientific research and requiring laboratory space and equipment stressed the provision of physical and technical equipment and facilities. Those academics were more likely to express the opinion that quality teaching and learning was related to practical skills and problem-solving. Four out of six academics from FAE and one from FAST commented that content, practical skills, and problem-solving-based education are central to teaching, especially in engineering subjects.

Some variation was revealed. The findings suggested that academics from the engineering

faculties hold higher expectations, and assign greater importance to ‘practical skills’ and ‘problem solving’ than do academics from FAS, FEAS and FCS. Despite this common view on the importance of students’ post-graduate skills, academics from the faculties of FAS, FEAS, and FCS were more concerned with the social aspects of teaching and learning. Academics from those same three faculties also raised the importance of ‘critical thinking’. An assistant professor from FAS believed that teaching in a university should be an analytical process, and she highlighted the importance of ‘knowledge, consciousness and aptitude’ in teaching. She went on to argue that the approach should be based on critical and comparative teaching and learning approaches, explaining that:

It is a Turkish type of thing. We tend to do everything [at the] last minute, that’s why just before the exam we try to memorise everything and then we forget. In my teaching methodology I have a philosophy: I try to educate my students to have knowledge, consciousness and aptitude. When you [are] able to train your students by this premise, then their education is worthwhile.

A similar view was put forward by an assistant professor from FEAS, who raised the issue of the academics’ perspective as a crucial factor in training students to be capable of critical thinking. For her, the importance lay in the beliefs and principles of academics, particularly as it concerns the overall quality of teaching:

If we are talking about quality...first of all we should believe that we are not high school teachers. We are academics, and there is a difference between them. When you believe that, the students feel that they are university students. Otherwise, they refuse to be critical thinkers and [they] may even feel sorry that your teaching is not based on memorising.

Returning to the themes and excerpts above, it should be assumed that quality teaching means that graduates leave the university equipped with not only subject-specific inputs, but also the skills required to excel in their professional lives. This echoes Morley (2007), who had previously identified the importance of core skills and subject knowledge in HE graduates. Interestingly, her study identified that, in a changing employment context, “‘just-in-time’” or disposable skills were needed to complement disciplinary knowledge’ (Morley (2007:204). The core subject skills of graduates should be supplemented by a range of skills and dispositions, so that they are able to deal with issues creatively. This study

illustrates the fact that the experiences of academics have reinforced the view that teaching and learning approaches are important in quality HE provision. They saw qualities such as; post-graduate skills and communicative skills as a necessary complement to the discipline-related knowledge typically acquired in HE.

#### **4.5. Research is key to achieving quality in HE provision**

As presented above, in both the Conceptual Framework and Chapter 3, conducting research has been associated with professional development and achieving quality HE provision. In interviews, academics saw research as essential, one of the important aspects of professional development and a key path to improving the quality of teaching and learning. More than half of interviewees argued that research was key to achieving quality HE provision. For one FCS assistant professor, the quality of education in general and of graduates in particular is highly associated with research. She explained the connection as also serving to improve the quality of the faculty, saying:

If the academics increase their quality [and] keep it by doing academic research...they become well equipped and then they will educate the students, equipping them well, too, and these graduates will be sought-after members in society, and this will simply show that the quality of the university is good, I think.

The above excerpt reflects what many academics value about research in an HE setting; its potentially transformative impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Academics from FEAS and FAS frequently cited ‘motivation’, loyalty, and a humane attitude as the key factors in systematising QA practices and notions of quality at an institutional level. Two FAS academics expressed deeply-held views which saw ‘motivation’ as a key factor in ensuring quality and facilitating institutional improvements, and both linked this to the conducting of original research. A senior lecturer in FAS commented that:

[Quality Assurance] does motivate people, and if we believe that we have academic quality in the institution that we are working in then people [will] work for that institution more, and they want to contribute to the creation of knowledge, the research studies. It does motivate the teachers and the students.

For the senior lecturer quoted above, quality was placed alongside the creation of knowledge and research studies, both of which can also be associated with motivation. The interview responses suggest that motivation is identified with and linked to the QA process in general. As this comment reveals, academics value, and acknowledge the importance of, an integrated institutional view of QA processes. In concert with this, an FEAS department head commented:

[Quality assurance] is a very good system for higher education so everybody is much more motivated...It's like the students' psychology; it's like passing an exam...So, you clean everywhere and you do a lot of things, which is very good for your department actually.

According to an FAS senior lecturer, quality should be achieved first at an institutional level. She explained how this perspective can lead to psychological concerns:

If we have quality, academic quality, then everybody feels [good about] the institution. If not, then you can't really make teachers contribute to the change and development, and you can't really force the students to believe that they are studying at a university. And it helps people to look forward rather than backwards.

Four academics separately suggested that QA processes would have a greater impact on practices if academics were willing participants and accepted suggestions and conclusions more readily. A senior lecturer from FAE phrased this as a 'great willingness and [showing] a lot of humanistic behaviour'. This resonates with Ratcliff's (2003) argument that quality is embedded in the personal and social values and expectations of individual academic staff. The factor of 'motivation', in this case, was set aside as a major factor in achieving quality at an institutional level. The academics also identified certain psychological issues, such as motivation and work ethic, as important in implementing QA processes. My findings therefore resonate with those of Harvey (2010), who argued that internal developments are only made possible when intrinsic practices becoming a way of life; in other words, when QA becomes a normal way of thinking for participants at the institution.

## 4.6. Summary

This chapter discussed comments from interviews relating to the second research question. Drawing upon analysis of these comments, this chapter described the views of QA and quality HE provision held by academics at EUL. A number of issues concerning the way in which QA is conceptualised at EUL were identified, providing a clearer understanding of the specific professional context under discussion.

Based on comments made during the interview process, academics' definitions of 'quality' and 'quality assurance' suggest that QA processes are understood as ensuring certain standards and a certain level of transparency in teaching and learning. In this research context, despite the lack of an institutional framework governing QA efforts, the academics held aspirations and convictions regarding their ability to provide a quality HE experience.

The alternative perspective of QA and quality HE provision referred largely to the 'quality' provisioning of technological resources and facilities. More than half the academics interviewed supported the idea that achieving quality in teaching and learning was strongly related to this factor (e.g. technological facilities such as projection machines and teaching facilities, including libraries and laboratories).

Comments made during interviews also showed how QA is perceived to be linked to the notion of educating students to be professionals. Most participating academics valued QA as a means of supporting the development of particular qualities in students. They suggested that teaching and learning approaches should provide subject-specific knowledge while also providing students with the interpersonal and employment skills needed to participate in a modern, globalised economy.

A final theme running throughout this chapter is the importance of research. Academics attach great importance to this, citing its potential benefits in transforming teaching and learning. Academics were enthusiastic about following QA processes as a means of

ensuring personal quality and professional development. The evidence presented here also suggests that research would be promoted by the contribution of knowledge, and that research is central to efforts to improve the quality of academics and teaching and learning. Several interviewees suggested that a psychological factor, 'motivation', was the key to these improvements.



## **Chapter 5: Implementation of QA in EUL: institutional structuring and practices**

### **5.1. Overview**

The issues confronting academics in implementing QA processes were investigated in relation to the third research question posed in the introductory chapter. Chapter 3 identified the growing significance of QA in HE generally, as well as how this trend could be directly linked to the Bologna Process. Chapter 3 also explained how North Cyprus became involved in the Bologna Framework. In addition, in addressing the first research question, Chapter 3 described the specific political difficulties preventing the formation and development of QA bodies at the national level in North Cyprus. The analysis of EUL texts suggested how this difficulty contributed to the potential for the proliferation of different QA practices in different HE contexts. The chapter also noted the considerable HE massification following the inclusion of Cyprus in the EU. Chapter 4, in addressing the second research question, provided an analysis of respondents' views and opinions of QA. This analysis identified some positive aspirations for QA development, largely linked to their aspirations for quality HE provision and how such efforts could be associated with different aspects of teaching, learning, research, and professional development. Taking into account the findings presented in above, this chapter will explore academics' views and opinions of QA implementation the specific context of EUL, and the gaps between the aspirations of academics and their views of the situated realities of QA processes. Academic perspectives and experiences are also compared with the QA implementation prescriptions as set forth by the university's administration.

### **5.2. Lack of institutional text: variety in QA practices**

The gap between QA processes at the national and institutional levels identified in Chapter 3 was recognised by several interviewees as having a significant impact on the development of the QA process at EUL. As will be seen with the excerpts below, the lack

of an institutional text governing QA, or of any published standards, was a key factor influencing QA practices. One comment reflecting such concerns came from an FAE assistant professor, who reported that:

Since I started teaching at the university, I haven't seen any published standard by the authorities. So each teacher follows their own procedures, their materials...standards may change with respect to the teacher's own way.

The findings of this study reveal that the lack of an institutional text guiding QA development has led to different faculty initiatives. Respondents pointed to tensions in existing QA practices, underscoring the negative influences of inconsistency and variation associated with perpetually shifting QA procedures. Some academics bemoaned the lack of consistency in the rules and regulations, and noted that certain requirements could be contradictory. The academics explained how some variation, inconsistency, and overemphasising of QA processes negatively impacted academic quality and standards in teaching and learning. A senior lecturer in FAS pointed out that:

At the beginning there were some regulations and some decisions taken but they were very inconsistent and, because of the inconsistency, it didn't work. The decisions are taken on an individual basis or [from a] very personal point of view. So, people took decisions because of something personal. If you're going to do something in order to raise academic quality, and make sure that you know you have quality in that institution, you have to have research about what's needed—what people need, what should be done—and the decisions taken here, in this case, I think were very quick and without much thought.

From this we see that QA procedures remain unclear; indeed, it is questionable as to whether the proposed standards clearly lead to improved practices, especially when there are inadequate and loosely defined criteria being employed at the institutional level. In interviews, academics agreed that it was important to have precise procedures in place to guide QA processes. As can be seen from the preceding examples, most academics reported that the QA processes were loosely structured, resulting in a high degree of variation between the different faculties. As one potential solution, interviewees suggested that QA processes should be more effectively established within each faculty. The influence of such organisational limitations was explained by an assistant professor in FEAS, who stated:

It is good to have a course outline, which is also given to the students. Then they know how to get ready for their courses. I do it not because I have to do it, but [because] it is the right thing to do. But I know some academics just do it for the sake of it but never follow it, nor does it have any relation to what he or she does in the class. It is important that this is controlled.

The other concern of academics was the lack of QA enforcement mechanisms at both the institutional and faculty levels. In interviews, almost half of participants expressed the view that there should be some mechanism of enforcement at the institutional level. This opinion was expressed most clearly by an assistant professor in FAST, who stated that:

[W]hen they ask you [to prepare] this outline, this shows you that they care about what you are teaching. If they care about what I am teaching, you get ready; prepare yourself better to do your lectures. If they don't care, if they don't ask, you don't care either. It is the same for everything, I think.

As was discussed above, although EUL's academics recognised QA initiatives as being broadly beneficial, they also saw the importance of following the procedures with some rigour. A common suggestion called for the university administration to institute some kind of enforcement mechanism which would allow it to oversee the progress of its QA initiatives and to verify their impact on academic performance mainly improvement in teaching and learning.

Study participants also described the gap between the proposed intentions of individual QA initiatives and their consequences, explaining their concern over the complex set of overlapping QA processes. A secondary concern voiced by several academics was the difficulty of understanding standards in the absence of any QA enforcement mechanisms at the institutional level. One FCS department head explained that, '[Academics] do not know specifically what those objectives and goals should be for higher education.'

An assistant professor from FAST expressed a similar sentiment in comparing the EUL to the UK education system:

At the moment, QA [at EUL] seems quite loose, I think. I don't know if you agree, but it doesn't seem too much. Nobody checks my lectures...maybe good, maybe bad. I don't know. All I know, [is that] some students understand, some students don't. Some students don't bother about understanding it. Because when I first came here I was concerned with what standard I should teach at. I had no idea. I had never lectured before. All my academic work had been in the UK.

A lack of strong oversight can exacerbate confusion and increase variation between faculties, and even between departments within the same faculty. An assistant professor in FAS argued that there was a serious problem in teaching one of the service courses, a core two-credit course relevant to all faculties, pointing out that:

The students get a shock when we ask them things to do or rules to apply. They find it so difficult because there is no such thing in their departments. For example, a very simple thing, the attendance policy, has not been seriously applied in other faculties.

As previous excerpts have illustrated and several participants emphasised, QA processes might take on various forms among the respective faculties. The research presented here reveals additional insights into issues relating to the implementation and practice of sound QA processes; for instance, the interviews have clearly illustrated the advisability of making QA processes clear and precise, as it pertains to both their initial implementation and long-term functioning.

The interview data also revealed the extent to which the QA process at EUL was challenged. Academics reflected on some critical issues, such as the declining quality of education. One of the sharpest comments was made by an FCS assistant professor, with 30 years experience, who made a critical comparison about the shifting of priorities over time, pointing out the lack of perceived quality in academic issues. He also expressed his concerns over the lack of interest in QA at the administrative level, which undermines the importance placed on academic issues such as teaching and the quality of knowledge delivery. He commented that:

It seems that the university has achieved a lot in terms of physical facilities but it is so unfortunate that, meanwhile, we have lost a lot in terms of quality. We should do

things to improve it before we lose it totally... We used to prepare the syllabus every year, and at the end of the year we were asked to report to the Dean about the progress and what has been achieved. It seems that this has been forgotten... it looks as if the instructor [can] go to the class and teach whatever he (sic) wants... this is the lack of quality, I think.

This sentiment was echoed by several participants, all of whom mentioned that the implementation of QA processes displaced previous processes that might have been more beneficial in terms of quality HE provision. An assistant professor in FEAS, describing the meaning and the essential features of QA processes, stated:

Well, quality assurance in this university means nothing. However, it should mean many things, to academic staff especially... Quality assurance is ensuring the use of developments and high standards in teaching.

Academics bemoaned the fact that academic quality has lost its importance and primacy over time, as other issues have taken priority.

### **5.3. QA practices: lack of resources and facilities**

Several interviewees identified issues surrounding resource strain, introduced due to either massification or administrative difficulties. Academics identified a link between the availability and quality of resources and the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. Academics reflected on how the lack of resources and facilities negatively affected quality HE provision. An FAE teaching assistant described the extensive challenges facing this aspect of quality:

When we applied quality assurance processes in our institution, we experienced some challenges. For example, there isn't enough technological equipment, and there aren't enough resources in the library, not enough books there. We can improve the resources in the library; also, for example, in the laboratories, we can increase the size of the computers.

Six of twelve academics from FEAS, FCS, FAS, and FAST acknowledged the importance of resources, and how a lack of resources can be a significant drag on quality in general. A

senior FAS lecturer offered additional insight:

We are talking about the lack of quality assurance and I try to use technology in my class. Because we didn't have the cable between the data projector and the laptop for a couple of months, I couldn't really use PowerPoint in my class. That's a small thing, and the administration thinks that it's a small problem, and it takes so much time to buy a cable to connect a laptop to the projector.

An assistant professor in FAST mentioned some of the recent improvements made by her faculty. She offered a comparison, too, arguing that although it is better now, it is still not satisfactory, and it is not possible to ensure quality teaching and learning with the limited resources available:

It is sad to say this, but only in the last two years have we had a projector. We have three machines in our faculty. We didn't have any before. Now we have them and we can show slides to the students and they can see photos of what you are talking about. Like, I am teaching them about insects, and I can show them the photos of insects and identify them better. Technical sources are better [but] not enough, because I [would] like to have [a TV,] video. I have lots of videos from the UK to show the life cycles of insects, but I can't show them. So there are things like that, but [the administration] doesn't care about these things.

The narratives were predictably negative with respect to achieving quality in teaching and learning with limited technological resources, as this was consistently mentioned as a major barrier to quality HE provision. What this alerts us to is how academic staff retain their commitment to, and often struggle to improve their academic environments, despite the frequent lack of technical resources and equipment. A striking observation is that resource-related problems were mentioned by academics in relation to inefficiencies observed in administrative services provided by the university. This study revealed a variety of views in terms of what academics expected to receive from their respective faculties.

The study indicated challenges and discrepancies in the expectations of academics, particularly in regard to the priorities placed on the factors contributing to quality HE provision. This is an important finding and a valuable tool for the university's administrative staff to address the allocation of resources in a manner that addresses academics' reasonable expectations of available resources, laboratories, access to field

work experiences, and experiment opportunities (see section 4.2). To this end, it is important for EUL's administrative staff to consider allocating resources in a manner that serves to align academics' expectations more closely with quality teaching and learning outcomes. This study's findings suggest that the barriers to achieving quality with limited resources and amid economic concerns brought about by massification are significant, particularly in relation to the potential for such concerns to impede quality in teaching, learning, and quality HE provision.

#### **5.4. Quality in teaching and learning: Teaching approaches and quality graduates**

As discussed in sections (4.3) and (4.4), the aspirations academics hold for QA and quality HE provision reflect the importance of supporting teaching and learning approaches with proportionate technological resources and facilities. This section describes some of the strains related by academics. An FAE department head was critical of the quality on offer in the delivery of education:

Our education system is not a proper one at all. It's not a proper one even in the world, and very few institutions try to challenge that, try to change the education system. We are giving knowledge, we are trying to give the knowledge to students in packs, but these are not related at all. And we are expecting that after that, they become professionals, they just find connections between these packs. The system of education...[it] should be provided as a whole, not discrete, and the best solution possibly will be the problem-based one.

The norm embedded in this narrative is challenged by the education system in place at EUL, as many academics echoed the sentiment that the present system is seen as a challenge or constraint at the institutional level. A senior lecturer from FAE raised a similar concern about teaching and learning approaches, underscoring the importance of practical work. For her, memorisation is not a proper system for educating engineering students:

I like students to do practical work; I don't like to give them exams. They can do this without learning, what we call memorizing...I am seriously concerned about

[the fact that] more than 50% of students are graduating without doing anything particularly [in] engineering because of copying homework, copying exams. So I find that worrying as well.

Five additional participants offered similar critiques of the education system, although from different perspectives. Two of the five participants were from FAS, the remaining three with FEAS, and each raised different concerns about the teaching and learning approaches. Their observations suggest that the EUL's system is overly reliant on memorisation, and that it is inextricably associated with passive learning, which is regarded as not being 'critical' (see section 4.3). These findings have an important impact on the level of quality of teaching and learning at EUL. As discussed earlier, in sections (4.3) and (4.4), the aspirations of academics for QA centred on the potential of such measures and organizational focal points to facilitate the education of students with regard to particular qualities, including employment skills. The above findings are important for the university administration, should they move to reconsider EUL's development programme (see section 3.6).

Apart from the approaches to teaching and learning discussed above, study participants also raised other issues, such as the 'student factor' in relation to the quality of teaching, as well as English language issues in relation to teaching and learning. Six of the 18 participants suggested that the quality of the teaching was, at least in part, dependent on the level of English proficiency among the students. The attitudes of students were also cited as critical to the perceived and actual quality of teaching delivery. A teaching assistant in FAE commented:

In the lectures I try to employ challenging, difficult problems, examples, but the students do not let me promote some of them. Yes, [some] understand, but most of them don't, so I have to come down to their level.

A FAST department head stated that the level, quality, and standards of teaching were very much dependent upon the students:

So I didn't know what level to teach. So I thought I should start basic and see how it goes. That's where I remained...basic...but again, [it] comes down to students wanting more or not wanting more. I don't think the majority bother about the



standard of education they get. In the UK, they complain, ‘This is not good enough. We need to know more. We want to know more’.

Findings derived from interviews are in line with other published research on the matter, and point to the fact that those academics also maintaining administrative positions, and possessing more experience in academia, seem to be more aware of and sensitive to the potential capacity of their students. That group of academics was more likely to focus on procedures of teaching and educating students, as opposed to maintaining high expectations for the students. The participants suggested that the aspirations of academics in terms of educating students have been challenged not only by the teaching and learning approaches, but also by the medium of instruction—English language.

### **5.5. QA bureaucracy and paper work**

Another issue confronting academics in their implementation of QA was the bureaucracy and sheer amount of paperwork involved in QA processes. A senior lecturer in FEAS described the tensions this could create:

The bureaucracy involved [in] setting up the system...the system may be set up and then may be a bit changed for one reason or another. It is not working or it is not gaining the information required or is gaining little or too much info and that sort of thing, [which is] to say that any system set up may need to be improved to the latest stage. The bureaucracy may, as I said earlier, involve a lot of work: a lot of time may be consumed in setting up and preventing it and that may get some reaction.

Relative to this point, Newton (2000) explains the rhetoric of quality and argues that people do not always embrace it willingly; some are resistant. Similarly some find that audit requirements become a burden on academic staff; academics spend time complying with the bureaucracy and its requirements, as opposed to educating students (Anderson, 2006; Newton, 2000; 2002). A senior lecturer in FEAS acknowledged the advantages of certain procedures to be followed, but also expanded on the disadvantages of such paperwork:

For me, if I have to give a course outline...[it means] having to sit and write a course outline. But at the same time it is good, because I need to focus on what I will be doing in the next 13 weeks, which is an advantage. I have to do paperwork,

which is a disadvantage.

A senior lecturer in FEAS pointed out that audit controls are used as a check against the demands made on a person's time in a well-functioning bureaucracy. This same lecturer offered a comparison with the working conditions and level of bureaucracy prevalent in the UK:

Well, when I compare it to England, in England there is much more bureaucracy, much more control...Here they control your time more. We are expected to be here at 8:30, I think. I mean nobody gets here at 8.30...but we are expected to be here and we are expected to stay here till 5.00. In England it is not like that. Our culture is much more bureaucratic. I mean, English culture is bureaucratic. Much more control over everything. Here there might be bureaucracy, but it's very inefficient. For me, I am a lecturer, I am an academic. I am happy about that. That means they don't bother me. What if they do bother me? Then they forget about it, which is good...maybe there is more paperwork going on at the moment but it is not hectic, and nobody really checks up. Maybe there are good intentions but they are not happening yet.

This makes it clear that exercising increased control over autonomous academics would not guarantee improved efficiency outcomes. In the review of pertinent literature provided above, QA processes were identified as potentially leading to the expanded bureaucratic structures required for auditing purposes, requiring additional administrative checks but doing nothing to enhance the ability to provide quality HE (Henkel, 2007; Newton, 2000; 2002; 2007). The interviews, too, show that QA processes can sometimes turn into a threat and burden in actual practice. Another participant, a senior lecturer in FEAS, voiced a paradox inherent to QA procedures:

If you are going to start a paper trail, then actually use it. What makes it difficult is you write something [to] put in a file...like this kid cheating. If you want me to write a piece of paper and I keep doing something with it, and if you want course outlines and I don't know what the future holds....

This perspective is potentially best explained by arguing that some of these concerns are closely related to the weak intervention of QA processes seen at an institutional level at EUL. A senior lecturer who also holds an administrative position in FEAS expressed his feelings on this topic, saying:

Well I think it's all paperwork, isn't it? The challenge is, you have to sit and do paperwork rather than doing something else...and I find paperwork incredibly dull. So that's challenging, trying to keep awake, trying to do it...but I mean, like I said, if it focuses my mind and my courses. The challenge is to do dull paperwork.

My findings otherwise suggest that the objective of achieving certain standards and controls over academic issues may create confusion and lead to more paperwork (Morley, 2003a; Newton, 2000; 2002). The oversight of the effects of systemising the application of QA procedures are the responsibility of the administration, and their efficient management involves increased bureaucracy; such intentions and objectives do not, however, seem to have any tangible impact on institutional quality (Harvey, 2010; Harvey & Newton 2004). This observation could have implications regarding the implementation gap (Anderson, 2006; Newton, 2000).

## **5.6. Time allocation and workload: lack of research**

As discussed in the Conceptual Framework and in Chapter 3, QA is conceptualised in relation to research and professional development in HE. Respondents suggested that research was crucial and influential in achieving quality in teaching and learning and, more widely, in quality HE provision. In this context, most academics bemoaned the fact that teaching quality and research were undermined by decisions made at the administrative level. Due to some decisions necessitated by massification and attendant economic concerns, the undermining of teaching and learning quality was a major concern for most academics interviewed. The interviews underscored, as well, the importance of issues such as time allocation, workload, and impositions made in course allocations, all of which had negative influences on the quality of teaching, learning, and research. Interviewees maintained that quality was largely related to the quality of the time spent preparing courses and materials. The interviews showed that academics' views of the process were negative; they argued that QA processes were highly structured hierarchically, with decisions made at the top-most levels of the institution. Multiple interviewees recounted receiving QA processes and procedures to be implemented as authoritarian decrees, imposing certain

procedures as the result of institutional decisions and divorced from classroom performance.

At one end of the spectrum, eight participants—from FAST, FAE, FAS, and FEAS—expressed the view that the teaching workload was too much. They might be asked to teach up to six or seven different courses, amounting to 21 hours of in-class time per week, in any given semester. A further concern of the academics, predominantly females, was the argument that increased teaching hours by definition reduced the quality of other academic-related issues, such as research pursuits, by limiting the time available to be devoted to them. As one assistant professor in FAS, argued:

Academics can't do research, which is the priority of being an academician. Teaching more than 12–15 hours is ridiculous and then you can't be productive unless you force yourself.

The interviewees were likely to claim that, after fulfilling their teaching obligations, they had little time left for their own academic research. They also suggested that the impact of the increased teaching workload failed to reflect the challenges imposed by the time required to prepare the course, which further reduced the time available to spend on both research and teaching. This sentiment was voiced directly by an assistant professor from FAS, who argued that:

The main difference between the academics in university and teachers in high school is doing research. When they increase the workloads it is inevitable that you reduce some of your time preparing your lesson if you want to do research.

The above quote demonstrates the importance of allocating time expressly for research pursuits; research was mentioned as one of the most important features of being an HE academic. The above discussion shows that academics experience challenges with time allocation. In other instances, these challenges have resulted in serious reductions to both time spent preparing lessons and performing research. The findings of this study resonate, too, with the view of Gosling and D'Andrea (2001), who argued that the TQM system in HE is time-consuming and distracting from the real business of teaching and research.

Accordingly, it was suggested that administrative decisions were relatively important. Academics expressed their feelings of dissatisfaction at being subject to such authoritarian decision-making processes. Several interviewees saw this as an institutional shortcoming. These concerns resonate with Hobday (2000) and Newton (2000), who have both previously noted that QA was initially conceptualised as a managerial concept, and the resultant concepts and practices were used as a substitute for quality itself in many instances (Morley, 2001b, 2003a).

As the quotes both above and to follow indicate, most academics argued that the number of teaching hours impedes academics from doing research, a point given that much more salience by the same academics repeatedly noting the importance of research in achieving quality in teaching and learning. Another strong opinion was expressed by an assistant professor from FEAS, who described her negative feelings about her department's decision to increase teaching workloads; her comments convey an image of a de-motivated educator:

Teaching workloads are too much. I am teaching five different courses this semester, and next semester it is going to be six. You can't prepare these courses with the same quality. For some of them, you may end up teaching them without preparing them and this automatically lowers the quality of your teaching...I know that preparing a PowerPoint [presentation] will be good for my teaching but I could not do it.

Some also noted the fact that outside impositions, whether from the department head or the Dean, inevitably resulted in lower quality due to the lack of preparation time, increased teaching workload, and other academic responsibilities such as projects and research. As one respondent explained:

My main problem was that I used to give lots of lectures. Like last semester, I got five different lecture modules. That means five different topics to teach and each of the modules is three hours per week. So 15 hours a week, I had lecturing hours. Without preparing them, some of the lectures, okay, I know them from teaching them in previous years. But three of the lectures, like the ones on [subject], I have nothing to do with that subject. 'Because we don't have any lecturer', they said, 'you need to teach this'. I said OK. So I had to prepare them all.

Academics were also concerned with the effects of massification on the teaching

environment. Academics made judgements on future conditions, anticipating insufficient means or the lack of an environment conducive to effective teaching, and many anticipated struggling to cope with increasing enrolment. Others were more concerned with other factors; in particular, many registered concerns over the availability of quality time to devote to their students. They felt that the number of students should be kept at a manageable level in order to allow them to maintain certain standards in student-teacher interaction. In internal quality evaluations, one FCS department head expressed the view that quality was strongly associated with the ability to maintain a practicable student-teacher ratio. Her comparison to European standards exposed the weaknesses inherent to EUL's policy:

In European countries the ratio in design lessons is 1:12, but here the ratio is 50 students to a teacher. The main reason for this is the economic concern, to reduce the need to employ another teacher. Quality teaching is possible when the ratio is 1:6 in a design lesson. They do not provide this. And also, in a classroom [with a] capacity of 35, we have 50 students.

It was observed that teaching and learning, facilities, research, and time available to be spent with students were all negatively influenced by short-term decisions and economic concerns brought to the fore as a result of massification. These conditions were all directly influenced by decisions made at the institutional level. Despite the unique environment at EUL, including the highly politicised national context largely unique to North Cyprus and the economic challenges faced by HEIs across the globe, the views, opinions and expectations of academics at EUL were similar to those revealed by research conducted elsewhere (Dale, 1999; 2005; Lim, 2001). As the above excerpts have underscored, academics were concerned about professional development, as research productivity is often evaluated in conjunction with the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. The academics suggested that the managerial aspects of the QA processes, such as putting increased pressure on academics in terms of increased class loads and increased paperwork, led to less time being available for both research and teaching and learning (Anderson, 2006; Morley, 2003a).

Both in a wider international context and at EUL, it has been noted that QA procedures and

processes might reduce the amount of quality time available to be spent on teaching and learning, including the quality time allocated to interact with students (Morley 2003a; Harvey & Newton, 2004). Interviewees felt that the QA process had negatively impacted their teaching and learning and the research projects they sought to conduct at EUL.

### **5.7. Lack of communication and cooperation: individual practices**

Apart from the procedural and practical challenges associated with QA discussed in prior sections, there were also critical concerns related to institutional managerial structuring. Academics suggested that QA practices were difficult to employ at the institutional level; these were identified as introducing negative influences if the processes were not developed internally. In her study, Morley (2003a) researched what aspects of quality in HE are being performed, and how those performances are valued. She argued that individuals enter into an academic environment with different experiences that affect the manner in which they might comply with or react to certain demands (Morley, 2003a). A consideration of the potential for disparities in how certain aspects of QA are valued should investigate the ways in which they have affected the QA climate and the extent to which they require subsequent action.

In the study presented here, nearly half of the participants noted feeling marginalised, either because of inconsistencies in the QA process or failure, on the part of administrative staff, to deliver and adequately explain the QA procedures and schemes to be followed (see section 5.2). An assistant professor from FEAS commented:

I hadn't known that there was such a kind of procedure thing related with quality assurance. I was working as a Dean last year, so I should know something about these things, but I don't. What I mean, really, is having the decisions or efforts of others, the opinions of others. I even hadn't heard anything about these things...I think I should have known more. So, the most important thing is this fact, [that] I don't know anything about them.

Respondents with more experience in the field of education were more likely to speak critically about their concerns over QA practices and their implementation than were

inexperienced academics. In addition, in their different histories, more experienced academics were able to compare and contrast the different power relations of institutional culture *before* and *after* any implementation of QA. As can be seen from the preceding extract and the commentary below the more experienced academics may feel they were potentially less constrained by expectations that they comply with institutional regulations. While in the contemporary institutional culture, they may feel that conformity with QA regulations is accepted and that their academic autonomy is more constrained. A senior lecturer in FAE commented:

I am worried about these questions because I didn't know that there are supposed to be procedures here. I know that there are certain things you are asked for and I am not really acting on them because I find it written in such...a level of Turkish that it makes me sick when I am reading it. So I just pick up what people are saying, and [that and] what is written are different things. I am very worried that the policy we had in 1999 was better than we are doing now.

The norms embedded in the above narrative also indicate the importance of fostering a high degree of trust and mutual respect between academics and the authority structures of the university. It can also be problematic when there is a careless pronouncement made to publicise a decision that has to be followed. Three participants, all native English-speakers, expressed negativity at having to use Turkish—for memos, in meetings, and in other official correspondence within the university—despite the fact that the EUL employs English as its medium of instruction. They found it degrading, and described the practice as unprofessional. The findings suggest critical concerns. One of the more volatile comments along these lines came from a senior lecturer in FEA, who said:

The only thing I picture in quality is, at some point there was a memo...We got a memo saying it is not a quality, it's a committee. I strongly remember thinking, I think I knew everyone on that committee, they were very young and they were all [of a particular national identity]...none of them have a degree, so I think that's an interesting combination of [a] quality committee...They don't know what they are actually talking about. I just accepted it as one of our typical universities paying people extra money. They are not actually going to do anything.

It is illuminating to see that the academics unequivocally describe the implementation of QA processes at EUL as a top-down imposition, and feel it would have been better to have



had more involvement and broader participation during the decision-making stage. These concerns also shed light on some of the reasons for confusion and variation in QA practices, as discussed in section (5.2). Academics' views and experiences of these concerns were critical, and led several interviewees to express negative feelings about the structuring of the institution. As Knight and Trowler (2000:69) argued, there might be a risk of negative feelings regarding academic work, which may result in 'change without change'. This is further supported by other authors having acknowledged the importance of internalising QA processes at the institutional level while simultaneously embracing QA initiatives (Newton, 2000; 2002). The positive effects of QA occur where the associated processes are increasingly incorporated, to the point where they become just part of the job, and where interest among the staff is fostered through engagement (Watty, 2006).

This creates unrealistic focal points, as the academics consistently noted that QA processes were weak, and those that were followed were implemented according to individual preferences. As McInnis (2000) points out, a failure to understand the factors influencing the views of academics is likely to lead to a widening gap between the rhetoric and achievement of quality HE provision. Ten participants raised concerns about QA processes not having been properly publicised prior to implementation. Although there were shortcomings in the procedures surrounding implementation, and a more general failing around the topic of institutional discourse, respondents related that they had been made more conscious of 'quality', and were more likely to consider it an accepted topic of discourse. A senior lecturer from FAS claimed that:

[A]s an individual my goal is to be pleased with achieving academic quality in my own individual courses. That's because of the inconsistency in practice...all those teachers try to do it on an individual basis and it does not work in practice because it has to come from top to bottom.

This concern was raised by a number of interviewees, and at its core centres on the achievement of quality in teaching and learning. Most assigned greater levels of importance to 'achieving academic quality' as the result of a personal and situated effort. A related argument provided evidence of how quality-related issues fared when implemented as the result of a personal choice made by academic staff, rather than as an imposition by the

institution. Interviewees suggested that the QA process had achieved little, and that it had been limited by personal will and individual decisions as to whether or not to adhere to the process. This can be explained as accepting and conceptualising QA differently, leading to different consequences given the situated decisions of individual academics (Eraut, 2000). An assistant professor, who also serves as an administrative coordinator in FCS, said:

Actually, it does not help me on an overall basis; I myself carry out things as best as I can, which is related to my personal quality standards. Authorities do not tend to deliver these quality things to us.

The comparison made between the individual practice and self-discipline of QA practices impacted its practices during the institutionalisation process. The academics suggested that QA processes have been adopted individually at the faculty level, or on other, more personalised scales, by individual academics. There were variations in the proposed processes between the respective faculties, and even between departments within the same faculty. As the above quote illustrates, QA processes were followed individually, the result of personal decisions. The perceived pessimism over the implementation of the processes could be due to a lack of communication over these principles or a lack of clarity in their intentions. At EUL, the exercising of individual initiative was more likely to result in variation in practices between faculties and between departments. The initiation of the QA process has not been internalised in teaching and learning, nor has it been sufficiently publicised within the university. This has been a major factor in limiting what an individual academic is capable of achieving. As an assistant professor from FAST remarked:

The [authorities] make individual academics tell you what standards you should follow when delivering education. Research is judged by other people outside of the university. For education purposes, it is basically us who should know what standard to teach and deliver to students.

This sentiment is highlighted by Eraut (2000; 2004), who has documented the influences of QA as it operates in its 'normal' manner and what happens when the process is neglected, which leads to a tendency to deny the complexity of the topic altogether and thus contributes to an erosion of professional autonomy and development. A senior lecturer in FAE commented on this as follows:

They call it quality assurance. Our quality assurance has not been public. I can't say it has any influence on my teaching at all. But many things do have an influence on my teaching. For whatever reason, I am determined to keep my standard to this British level of university, which seems to be more like what it is in Europe.

One academic expressed the view that North Cypriot HE should be held to European standards, although she did add that she did so as a result of a personal choice, rather than an institutional goal. Most QA processes meant to foster improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, however, remain largely unchanged (Harvey, 2000; Knight & Trowler, 2000; Yorke, 2000). This argument also reflects the discussion presented above, in section (4.5), which asserted that most academics hold personalised views on the importance of motivation and the personal will to follow QA processes as implemented at EUL.

In terms of institutional structure, the preoccupation of EUL's administrative staff with the limited effort put forth by academics does not sufficiently account for their failure to communicate effectively or foster the participation of different parties prior to adoption. The evidence presented above suggests that academics would have liked to have had a greater role in the decision-making process. The personal willingness of academic staff members to observe and adhere to QA initiatives was mentioned as central to the quality of the institution. A senior lecturer in FAE voiced her concerns with the following:

It is the logic of the situation and what the rules are and this is the best course of action...The whole thing is not just one department or one faculty [in] the whole university...I think the administration don't realise what good will they actually have, and in fact many times our department skips through term by term because of the good will, because people are willing to put [in] extra.

Returning to the themes discussed in earlier chapters, academics held negative feelings, including apathy and alienation, towards the implications raised by QA processes. This underscores the importance of academics' understanding of QA processes and their implementation as a rightful part of academics' daily life and regular duties. In this light, it is easy to empathise with their insistence that the processes as implemented should make

sense, the criteria and requirements should be precisely specified by the institution.

Another issue frequently raised in interviews was the decision-making process of the institution. As was touched upon above, several academics made a point of emphasising their feelings of having been disregarded at certain points of the decision-making process. The complexity of feeling disregarded, along with the sense of disparity it engenders, can be detrimental to the implementation of QA processes. An assistant professor from FEAS described the situation as follows:

To participate in those procedures, processes, I guess it's an important part [of] our personal identity as well, for people working in this institution to identify themselves with that institution. At the end...I think...they will recognise the institution as their institution, the place will be their place and this is a great asset for everybody working in a particular institution.

Most academics interviewed for this study expressed concerns and misgivings regarding their level of involvement and participation in the decision-making process. The views and feelings held by academics about the overall process were not positive. This resonates with findings in the existing literature, such concerns having been previously documented by Newton (2000). He argued that 'quality' needs to be 'inherent in the working lives and practices of academic staff' (Newton, 2000:159). It would appear from this evidence that the opposite—low levels of participation by academics in the decision-making process—can be detrimental. Perhaps more importantly, academics may resist the resultant QA proposals if they are seen to have been handed down from the institutional level with no opportunity given for input (Anderson, 2006; Newton, 2000; Watty, 2003; 2006).

One potentially controversial issue raised by academics was the fact that QA processes led to increased managerial control and less autonomy for the academics. Academics raised the concern that, after the rules and procedures had been set out, there was a lack of staff involvement; many argued in favour of increased participation and involvement by academic staff. Eight participants mentioned the importance they placed on the idea that the criteria considered by management during the decision-making process should include as much involvement with the academic staff as was practical. The underlying assumption of

such a critique was expanded by many, to be a ‘cultural’ shortcoming at the EUL. Most academics suggested that this has important implications on any policy issue and the eventual implementation of that policy at an institutional level. An assistant professor in FEAS referred to this, negatively, as being a cultural inheritance. She said:

It’s a cultural thing very much related [to how] people really perceive the process, how people perceive others’ behaviour, others’ decision-making, others’ opinions...I don’t think that there is a very democratic culture here, particularly in this institution. I mean, there is no real regard for the opinions of the others. I know best, I am the leader here so I know best, and you should just go away. So it’s a kind of obedience culture, I guess, cultural obedience...people just warn others to do what they want them to do, say what they want them to say, because they want their places to be secure, and this is cultural bias.

In addition to touching upon the non-democratic nature of EUL, such comments also raise the issue of the importance of fostering different voices and perspectives at decision-making levels. The argument in support of giving a greater voice to the views of academics, and of affording them a greater degree of involvement in the decision-making process, is presented by Newton (2000; 2002). In this instance, the idea that QA should be contextualised—as successfully doing so would increase the likelihood of attaining the hoped-for end result of dynamic institutional improvement—was discussed often, and in relation to various agendas. Academics participating in this study felt it important to understand and accept the proposed QA processes, as opposed to having pre-conceived, externally-sourced, externally-developed frameworks imposed on them. This echoes similar sentiments held by UK academics, who have repeatedly given voice to the view that QA policy in UK HE contexts should rely on the involvement of different parties (Harvey, 2009; 2010; Knight & Trowler, 2000; Newton, 2000). A department head from FEAS suggested that QA processes should involve goals, objectives, and more participation:

For those goals and objectives to be determined, everybody in that department should have some sort of participation. They should have their decision-making participation there, and they should have their own effort realised in the process. So, they should have something to say about those procedures, about those goals and objectives.

More than half of study participants cited administrative withdrawal and a general lack of

participation by various parties as major reasons for the resultant individualised, divergent QA practices. This process is actually endorsed by some studies of HE in Australia. For example, Watty (2006) argues that QA policy should give legitimate voice to multiple stakeholders, and particularly to academics. If this does not happen:

[T]here is a risk for universities that the large amounts of resources, both human and financial, currently dedicated to quality assurance and quality improvement programmes, result in little more than an exercise in compliance and form filling' (Watty, 2006:298).

The findings of this study coincide with the caution voiced by Watty (2006), and emphasise the importance of including academics in the decision-making processes at the institutional level.

In my study, as far as the underlying purposes of QA processes, seven participants felt that the QA process as it stands had been operationalised in an authoritarian manner. The participants did agree that a QA framework is a document proposed by the authorities; subsequent discussion revealed that academics see the potentially significant effect of QA processes on organisational culture as the primary concern. Academics held negative views of the process, largely because it led to them feeling de-motivated, as they were not included in the decision-making process. This highlights the cultural nature of their objection—put simply, the QA processes to be implemented at EUL were proposed in an unconstructive manner. Three participants, each of whom also holds an administrative position at EUL, stated separately how neglected they were made to feel at being told what to do. An assistant professor in FEAS said:

I can tell you about my personal quality procedures that I follow. Authorities tend not to deliver and share these things with us. It is a culture, I think: the boss tells you what to do and you do it, yet it is not explained clearly. So I don't know much.

This is indicative of a sentiment echoed by much of the academic staff participating in the interview process. Decisions made at the administrative level can easily be greeted with negativity and a desire to subvert the implementation process. These findings strengthen those presented by other studies on the topic, and underscore the gap created between

academics expectations of inclusion in the decision-making processes dealing with QA processes and the reality of a seemingly top-down directive (Anderson, 2006; Newton, 2000; 2002). Newton (2000:159) describes this as ‘feelings of neglect by management and a lack of influence of the academic staff over matters affecting the academic units’ .

The gap between the actual decision-making process and the expectations of academics at EUL was significant; eight participants noted the importance and necessity of increased involvement for the academic staff. These findings suggest that most academics participating in the study shared at least some of the same opinions regarding the lack of communication and participation typifying the QA processes at the decision-making level. An assistant professor in FCS described her feelings about this as facing the risk of losing control and of being seen as ‘a problem’. She said:

[T]he participation of everybody is considered as something like a problem, which really it is not. It's something which enables, it eases with the process. But, you know the administrator in every kind of institution, not just in higher education institutions, in every kind of institution, in certain cultures and I think we have that culture here, too, considers participation or enabling everybody to say their words as something [that is] problematic...So, not everybody wants to hear others and they just want them to obey the rules. But these rules, if you want them to be really obeyed by everybody, really they should be decided together. Not everybody will say yes to everything, but still, being there has a great importance for everybody. That's the main challenge, I guess, that I have observed throughout my academic career.

Among these eight interviewees, the four who held no administrative positions and who participated in no part of the university's decision-making process stated that they found top-level management to be unnatural and insincere in delivering and discussing administrative issues relevant to the university. There were other impediments to the involvement of academic staff at the decision-making level, such as cultural autonomy, which can be considered a characteristic of Turkish culture. Most participants felt academics were intentionally bypassed in organisational decisions, and concluded that having done so would inevitably influence the attributes and outcome of QA implementation. The university's decision-making strategies for the formulation and implementation processes can therefore be seen to be in need of re-evaluation, as they may

lead to unintended negative consequences, to dissatisfaction, and to unattainable expectations and practices. There were concerns about a lack of ideas from the bottom, and the issue of psychological attributes was raised yet again, in this instance referring to sensitivity and sincerity. A senior lecturer in FAS offered comments critical of the decision-making process, saying:

You don't need to be in the top decision-making committee, but more ideas should be taken from the people downstairs. I call it downstairs because in the EUL we have a cultural saying, 'upstairs, downstairs'. 'Downstairs' means the people working at teaching and all the academic staff, and the 'Upstairs' means the administration and director degree. So, getting more ideas about and sincerely asking people what they really need, what they want, what they need in the department, and sincerely caring about it.

Participants demonstrated that, at the organisational level, they were more likely to want a communicative environment. To facilitate the participation of academics in both the decision-making and implementation processes related to QA, a more democratic institutional culture is needed. The fostering of an open culture was both seen as important in QA implementation at the institutional level and was raised by interviewees hoping for a more cooperative atmosphere; four participants felt that 'team work', 'communication', and 'negotiation' were important if EUL was to excel as an institution. The academics suggested that, in the long term, the adoption of a more democratic culture would provide clear targets that various actors could rally around. An assistant professor in FAE said:

The team spirit is important. Colleagues communicating and helping each other by finding the materials and sharing the materials between colleagues is an important point. You save time and manage to improve yourself more quickly, so it is a really good insight. And we have lots of experience of communicating with colleagues [on academic issues and materials] within the department, and this is good for improving the quality assurance.

The excerpts provided above have allowed the mapping of academics views and experiences of the QA process, and underscored the importance of their psychological state and its impact on the implementation process. In section (4.2) the 'psychological state' and 'academics' will' were highlighted as important factors in the successful implementation of QA processes. Earlier studies have also noted the importance of the psychological state of



academics; for example, Newton (2000) has noted that: ‘The staff saw themselves as faced with circumstances in which low morale, and a degree of alienation and resignation, were able to flourish’ (2000:159). Similar arguments by Locke (2007:95) highlight that:

[T]he maintenance of staff motivation, commitment and loyalty, in fact is the state of ‘psychological contract’ or the perceptions of the reciprocal promises and obligations between individual staff and their employer.

Locke (2007) also emphasizes the importance of internal issues related to employment conditions, roles, and positions which tend to dominate the actual practices of academics.

## **5.8. Summary**

This chapter has described some of the issues confronting the professional practices of academics tasked with implementing QA processes at EUL. Some themes discussed in this chapter explain the reasons for such difficulties from the perspective of the academics tasked with the actual implementation of the prescribed QA practices. The interviews suggest the formation of a significant gap between academics’ aspirations and their perceptions of the realities of QA practices. The major impediments identified are the absence of any overarching national- and institutional-level QA policy. Just in looking at the example of the EUL, the loose foundation set up by the university’s administration resulted in confusion and inconsistency in the actual practices implemented. The lack of strong enforcement mechanisms at either the institutional or faculty level was mentioned as a negative factor influencing the practices of academics towards modes of behaviour in direct contradiction of various faculty initiatives.

The general lack of resources and suitable facilities was also identified as a major concern of academics. The availability of resources, and the quality of those resources which are made available, both jeopardized the ability of academics to maintain existing levels of quality in teaching and learning. Information generated from the interview process suggests that there were also strains introduced by both massification and increased internationalisation. The requirement that courses be taught in English, students’ level of

proficiency in that language, and their level of motivation were all seen as having potentially negative effects on QA practices. Multiple participants also mentioned that massification has had unforeseen negative influences, such as an increase in the number of students, which reduces the quality and quantity of time spent on teaching and learning activities.

The interviews suggested that some bureaucratic requirements and an increased volume of paperwork have both had negative influences on academics professional practices. These were presumably requirements related to QA, such as paperwork, which was seen as taking away from the time academics had available to devote to other issues, such as preparing lessons or conducting original research.

The study's findings raised the concerns of academics' that some administrative decisions and the processes leading to them had negative influences on their professional practices. Academics repeatedly noted the fact that this has also been negatively influential on professional development, as research was linked to efforts to improve the quality of the academics and of teaching and learning in relation to quality HE provision.

Lastly, the interviews suggest that, overall, QA processes were not effective due to the aforementioned obstacles in place at the institutional level. This contributed greatly to the divergent processes and practices adopted across the different faculties. These findings illustrate the fact that academics wish to have increased participation in the decision-making process, and to have a more cooperative and collaborative institutional environment.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions, Reflections and Recommendations**

### **6.1. Introduction**

This thesis has provided an analysis of the perspectives and opinions of QA and quality HE provision held by academics at EUL. It provides background on QA development more generally, and discusses how QA has been developed in the North Cyprus HE context in particular. This study has explored how academics understand and value QA for the contributions it can make toward the goal of achieving quality HE provision. Lastly, this thesis has analysed the impact of the QA processes by exploring the issues confronting academics in their implementation of QA at EUL.

This chapter is divided into seven additional sections. Section (6.2) discusses the limitations of the presented research. Section (6.3) recounts the research questions and provides reflections on the study. Section (6.4) reflects upon my journey and experience as a novice researcher. Section (6.5) examines the contributions of this study to the broader field. Section (6.6) offers recommendations for the EUL. Section (6.7) considers the implications of this study for professional practice, and for HE QA policy. The final section (6.8) reflects on the research in this study and suggests ways in which it could have been improved, as well as proposing avenues for further research.

### **6.2. Limitations of the research**

The process of reflecting on my research begins with a consideration of the interview sample. Before answering the research questions developed in section (6.3). I first reflect on the limitations of my research. The sample examined in this study is not claimed to be representative. Had more time been available, a larger study might have explored the views of a greater number of participants, with a variety of academic and administrative duties from each faculty, as this would have provided a more in-depth analysis of academics opinions of the QA processes as implemented at EUL. I have made every effort, however, to introduce variety into the sample, by focusing on differences such as gender and

nationality, and making distinctions between different academic and administrative duties.

Restricting the sample to only the institutional level could be considered a further limitation. Dale emphasises the emerging ‘pluri-scalar’ nature of the governance of education and HE policy, and calls attention to the need to move beyond a ‘field of context’ and explore ‘the relationship between different scales of governance’ (Dale, 2005:124). Although some discussions have been provided, primarily to situate the interview data, the absence of pluri-scalar dimensions is a clear limitation. My exploration of QA processes has been confined to my own HE context, rather than attending to the wider range of HE environments in North Cyprus. It did not include or account for the perspectives of actors at either the national or international levels, as this was considered to be beyond the scope of an EdD thesis. My findings can nevertheless be considered valid and relevant in relation to the institutional level. My assertion that the sampling strategy employed was suitable for differentiating, analysing, and testing assumptions about features and differences between groups in my particular context is supported in the pertinent literature (Flick, 2006).

A further limitation is the gender dimension. I did not address this in my Conceptual Framework or in my literature review. Gender is clearly a potential influencer of HE culture, and this is a prime topic for any future research.

### **6.3. Answering the research questions**

This thesis was designed to explore the newly implemented QA processes at EUL. My literature review (Chapter 3) provided accounts of QA processes in HE in an international context and helped me to understand QA in HE both conceptually and theoretically. Furthermore, this review informed the conceptual and theoretical base used for my subsequent research. The primary research aim addressed by this thesis is: From the perspectives of academics in an HEI in North Cyprus, how does the development of QA processes impact their professional practices? This aim was broken down into the three main discussions contained in my thesis. In Chapter 3, I discussed the development of QA and its connection to the Bologna Process. I also described the particular political

difficulties facing the development of QA in North Cyprus. These difficulties are reflected in the lack of development of any national QA policy or QA bodies in North Cyprus. This had a real-world impact on the development of QA at the institutional level, and was a main contributor to the subsequent proliferation of different QA practices put in place across the different faculties and departments at EUL. My research has identified some of the challenges created by the absence of a national QA policy, and some of the challenges related to concerns introduced by massification in HE in North Cyprus.

The second question posed as part of this research was: How do academics understand and value QA for its role in achieving quality HE provision? This question sought to explore academics views and experiences of QA processes, and to associate those findings with their understanding of QA and quality provision in a HE context in particular. Chapter 4 contains an examination of academics' perspectives regarding how and to what extent the QA processes impacted their decisions and professional practices.

My analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with EUL academic staff (Chapter 4) suggests that academics have acknowledged that the QA process is a way of achieving increased quality in teaching and learning. The findings suggest that academics aspirations for QA are that it has become a way of thinking about quality mainly in terms of achieving standards and transparency in teaching and learning.

Discussions centred on how academics measure quality in HE provision suggests that QA is most readily associated with the adequate provision of technological resources and facilities, such as computer laboratories, projectors, and other teaching aids. The academics understandings of QA and their assumptions that QA practices have consistently been shown to produce the expected results gains a context-specific meaning when considering the variety in practices observed between the different faculties at EUL. For most academics interviewed as part of this thesis—drawn mainly from FAE and FAST—the meaning of QA related to the quality and availability of resources and the ability to conduct research, field work and experiments. In specific faculties, such as FAS, FCS, and FEAS, the QA implementation process served to highlight issues such as the problems introduced

by growing enrolment figures and the effect this had on the ability of academics to effectively budget quality time to devote to students.

The interviews suggest that academics value QA as a means of supporting the developments of particular qualities in students, such as educating them to be professionals. Importance was also attached to teaching and learning approaches. Academics suggested that, specifically in HE, normal teaching and learning activities should ensure that students leave the university fully equipped with not only subject-specific skills but also interpersonal skills. In the faculties of FCS, FAS, and FEAS, academics consistently indicated that ‘critical thinking’ was one of the important features of a student’s education. In contrast, in faculties such as FAE and FAST practical skills and problem-solving have been given primacy.

In addressing the second research question, the interviewees suggested a strong association of QA with contributions to knowledge and research. The academics valued research, and described it as key to ongoing professional development in HE. They also linked research to improvements in teaching and learning outcomes, and more generally to educating students.

The third research question posed in this thesis is addressed by research findings suggesting that the absence of a national level QA policy was a major barrier to the successful implementation of the QA process, particularly when combined with the lack of a QA framework at the institutional level. My study suggests that the implementation of QA initiatives at the institutional level has been challenged by the absence of institutional texts and detailed descriptions of the principles and schemes of the QA processes to be adopted. This is one potential explanation for the fact that academics conceptualised QA differently, in addition to serving as an explanation as to why there was such variety among the different faculties of the EUL. These shortcomings led to loosely applied, inconsistently enforced QA practices. Newton (2000; 2002) theorised that such a sequence of events might play out in such a manner and, for him, academics prospects of adapting to the emerging demands of QA in HE rests in their ability to adapt to the various individual

aspects and prescriptions as they interact with them in actual practice. The conclusions we can draw from this supposition suggest that the influences of QA processes in the HE context have been a real challenge to academics professional practices.

Another concern raised repeatedly during the interview process was the resource strain caused by massification. Academic practices were affected by factors such as student enrolment and the availability of physical and technological facilities. Presumably, student enrolment will impact QA, even if only in requiring that enrolment numbers be managed going forward. In a rapidly changing teaching and learning context, the ready availability of quality resources is a necessary complement to quality teaching and learning. While some academics made efforts to maintain high personal standards of quality in their teaching, the lack of quality resources, the effects of massification, and economic concerns may serve as barriers to the maintenance of quality in teaching and learning.

Interviews suggested that teaching approach was important in achieving and maintaining quality HE provision. The interviewees suggested that university education should not be based on memorisation, but should instead seek to provide students with a quality education supported by quality provisioning of technological resources and facilities.

Academics implied that, in the context of the EUL, QA has created additional bureaucracy. Some participants suggested that the QA process amounts to a clear rise in bureaucratic work for academics, thereby further reducing the time available to devote to teaching, learning, and research. The academics argued that QA creates more paperwork, but has not actually achieved much of note in terms of helping the university's faculties improve their teaching and learning outcomes, and more efficiently provide a quality HE experience for students.

Teaching workloads were also mentioned as a critical factor, with the lack of quality time available to be devoted to class preparation and research pursuits mentioned in this context, as well. The data generated from interviews suggests that QA was seen by academics as a key for research and professional development in HE. These factors led participants to view

and describe the QA implementation process and resultant practices negatively.

My research has proven that the institutional managerial structuring has been challenging in EUL. The interviews provided examples of issues such as resistance, managerial control and reduced autonomy. Academics expressed their feelings of dissatisfaction at being subject to managerial control. Most held views that in EUL QA processes and procedures are implemented as authoritarian decrees, imposing certain rules as a result of institutional decisions divorced from teaching and learning quality and professional development. For example, academics noted feeling marginalised because of the impositions made by the management in academic matters, such as increasing workloads or course allocations. This can be viewed as a lack of consensus between academic staff and the EUL's management. The term *distraction* is suitable in the case of EUL as the demand that appears to be exceeding the capacity of academics' energies and time in fulfilling their teaching obligations. It was indicated that a gap existed between their initial aspirations for the QA process and the reality of the system as implemented, which stemmed from a lack of integrity and loyalty between the management and the academic staff.

The above issues can be cited as some of the main concerns of academics, especially when the majority of the participants suggested that teaching and learning should involve the potential benefits of autonomy in teaching and learning. Also, research was crucial in achieving quality in HE provision. In my research one of the strongest themes in many of the interviews was the complementary relationship of teaching and research. Therefore, it would appear from the evidence that the lack of research and time for preparation is detrimental in quality HE provision. This can be summarised as reducing academic autonomy and professional development. In addition, it has been illuminating to see the academics unequivocally describe the implementation of QA processes as a top-down imposition. This is the conclusion of Morley (2003 a: 91): 'quality assurance involves a degree of multiskilling, as academics also have to operate managerially'. This is experienced as the lack of opportunity to focus on research for professional development and quality of teaching respectively. Most of the participants in different faculties had a common view on the deleterious effects of institutional context and that quality-related issues followed by individual academics were regarded as limiting what they were capable



of achieving.

A further concern of the academics was the managerial control in academic issues; they expressed their feelings of dissatisfaction at being subject to such an authoritarian top-level management. Most of the academics, especially those who are experienced, criticised how the managerial demands appear to have engendered implications for the low morale and motivation to follow Quality Assurance. Most expressed an opinion about future conditions, anticipating insufficient means or the lack of an academic and professional environment conducive to quality teaching and learning and professional development. Also, it was strongly indicated that the academics felt ignored, which along with the sense of disparity it engenders can be detrimental to the implementation of QA processes at institutional level.

In the light of this, it is easy to empathise with their insistence that the processes as implemented should make sense, the criteria and the requirements should be precisely specified by the institution internally, and that it would have been better to have had more involvement and broader participation during the decision-making stage. The academics suggested that the managerial control and lack of integrity in academic issues is accompanied by a feeling of demotivation and a sense of dispossession, which ended when individually motivated academics wished to attain greater levels of quality in their professional practices. The underlying assumption of this wish was expanded by many to mean establishing an 'institutional culture to have a more cooperative and dynamic institutional environment'.

As discussed above, QA practices at EUL seem to have been implemented in a highly individualised manner, rather than adhering to a single institutional goal or set of goals. Whether the conceptualisation of quality was the same or different within each faculty, a shared view of what constitutes quality at EUL was assumed to exist at the individual level. If QA was meant to be seen as a way of improving quality in teaching and learning, then there should have been enforcement mechanisms in place at both the faculty and institutional levels. The result of such non-systematic implementation and regulatory

weakness is the implementation gap between stated and actual QA practices observed at EUL.

The aspirations of academics as revealed by the interview process resulted in situated realities of the QA processes, particularly in relation to teaching and learning. Academics suggested that the gap between their initial aspirations for the QA process and the reality of the system as implemented stemmed from a lack of integrity and communication between the departments and the institution. Some of this can be traced to a lack of consensus between academics and EUL's administrative staff. The highly individualised interpretation of QA processes at EUL is central to academics' need for and expectations of a more cooperative and communicative institutional environment (Knight & Trowler, 2000). This can have implications both for the more individualistic attributes and practices which were often reinforced by weak interventions and in those instances where there was a dramatic implementation gap (Newton, 2000).

One theme touched upon by almost every participant was the widespread dissatisfaction with the decision-making structure in place at the institution. Empirical data has demonstrated that there is a gap between what academics would like QA processes to help them achieve and what they think it has accomplished. The evidence presented here suggests that academics were not satisfied with the institutional decision-making structure, as they desire an institutional environment which affords them increased participation in the decision-making process.

Regardless of the variety of meanings that can be attached to the notions of quality and QA, it was ultimately the academics that were individually motivated, and wished to attain greater levels of quality in their professional practices. The findings provide evidence of, and remind us that, the key issues identified were: more communication, more participation that was responsive to the views of academics, and the desire to have a more supportive, inclusive institutional environment. Such change is only possible in a collective and collaborative manner, as is reflected in examples drawn from the UK (Knight & Trowler, 2000). It was demonstrated that more senior academics, who had a wider range

of experiences in academia, were more likely to state a preference for a more cooperative and collaborative academic environment. Analysis of the interviews illustrated some of the inherent tensions between academics and the university administration. Unfortunately, decision-making processes at EUL are bound by more conservative traditions, and academics do not possess the same kind of autonomous voice in decision-making processes as might be found at other HEIs beyond the North Cyprus context. There was a similar finding in a study conducted in Turkey (Billing & Thomas 2000a; 2000b); this Turkish cultural tradition carries with it implications for the implementation of QA processes.

#### **6.4. My journey**

My journey began as a novice researcher; I had undertaken qualitative research in my work place, which I found challenging but motivating. The second and, for me, most important thing to come out of this research was the content of the data collected. From the beginning of the interviewing process, I quickly realised that my feelings as an academic, and the perceptions, experiences, and feelings of those participating in my study were not very different from each other or from those noted in research conducted abroad. The similarities between my findings and the experiences of other academics engaged primarily with UK and Australian higher education, make this study not only unique and topical, but also position it as a pioneering study of the North Cyprus HE context. It was an interesting and challenging experience. In retrospect, the most important thing for me was giving the academics interviewed a chance to voice their ideas and wishes regarding the QA process at EUL. From a researcher's point of view, I am satisfied with the exploration of topics attendant to this study. My hope is that this study will be a pioneering work which will shed light on QA processes and lead administrators to consider these findings in the future.

#### **6.5. Contribution to knowledge and the argument of my thesis**

This study served, in part, as an opportunity for the academics at the EUL to voice their views of, and recount their experiences with QA processes and practices. Given its qualitative nature, this study is rich in content and, moreover, is pioneering and original,

and demonstrates useful findings pertinent to those seeking to build more successful and efficient QA processes and foster a stronger culture of quality at the institutional level. The main implication for the university is to understand the need to develop a strategy and create a cooperative and dynamic institutional environment which leads to the universal and consistent institutionalisation of quality and QA processes. To achieve certain levels of quality and standards in academic issues such as teaching and learning, and educating students to be professionals, academics need to be and feel supported by their institution. At a minimum, this entails the adequate provision of resources and facilities.

The most important factor for university administrators to bear in mind is the need for strong enforcement mechanisms at the institutional level. The most important issue highlighted in this study, I would argue, is the interplay of the QA processes and their impacts on the goal of improving institutional quality. It is important to consider what constitutes quality in teaching and learning, and how best to achieve quality in HE provision. This study has highlighted the fact that academics at EUL felt that:

- Standards, transparency, and the successful implementation of QA processes can be achieved by following definitive and clearly stated principles and criteria.
- Resources are important to creating and maintaining quality academic and administrative delivery mechanisms.
- Educating students should be done with an eye toward particular qualities, such as professionalism and creative thinking.
- Improved learning outcomes can be achieved through systematic control and enhancement of QA mechanisms at the institutional level.
- Research is central to quality HE provision, as well as quality teaching and learning.
- Participation by and involvement of academics in decision-making processes at the institutional level is vital.
- Communication and cooperation in the academic environment at the institutional level is vital.

This study provides an overview of the many issues seen as critical to the development of

effective QA policies. While the above issues are important, it is also critical to note that the university must broaden participation in its decision-making processes by involving academics at all levels.

## **6.6. Recommendations for the EUL**

This section considers and proposes changes to the university's style of management which could contribute to a more supportive and productive academic environment. Quality assurance processes should be a part of the internal strategic planning of any HEI. By considering QA at all stages of planning, it is possible for the processes and practices to contribute to improvements in teaching, learning, and research (Harvey, 2009; 2010). We also must consider the broader institutional environment within which the numerous dynamics affecting HE and HEIs exist. These include factors such as the structure of the institution and the impact of the cultural context within which the university exists, as was discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, as well as the implementation of, or reliance on, an authoritarian system of management, where QA processes are delivered from above, as directives rather than proposals. My study has shown that academics are fully aware of some of the radical changes introduced at the EUL as a result of the proposed QA processes. The data also demonstrates, however, that the majority of them were not satisfied with the manner in which these processes were introduced, and they are particularly dissatisfied with the lack of information and clear communication, both factors having negatively affected the initial outcomes. Attempts at a more cooperative environment in HEIs should be an underlying philosophy of academia, as there is a clear need for increased flexibility, improved communication, and cooperation at the institutional level (Harvey, 2009; 2010). This research leads to the conclusion that QA processes would be more effective if they were accepted as part of the everyday activities, with more involvement and participation by academic staff. This thesis suggests and recommends a more dynamic and communicative university context. My personal view would be that QA processes are most likely to result in desirable changes when academics are involved in all aspects of the decision-making process, as has been argued by Anderson (2006), Knight and Trowler (2000), Newton (2000; 2002), and Watty (2003). The EUL academics

interviewed for this thesis consistently revealed feelings of isolation and described feeling ignored by their exclusion from academic-related decision-making processes. These feelings are a prime contributor to their broadly negative views of the QA practices instituted at the EUL. I hope that this study serves as a pioneer, giving voice to academics, first at an institutional level and then at the national-level, by leading to the inclusion of academics and their perspectives in bodies such as YÖDAK and within North Cyprus HEIs.

As an academic and an institutional director, I hope to see these prescriptions followed, not just by the executive board and top management at EUL, but hopefully at all North Cyprus HEIs. It is not possible to have effective, positive influences when there is no dynamic communicative and cooperative environment fostered at the institution, especially if one considers that academics must be made to feel a sense of ownership, in order for any policy or management initiative to be successfully implemented (Anderson, 2006; Locke, 2007; Newton, 2002; Watty, 2003; 2006). Without a doubt, the participation and involvement of academic staff is a precondition to instilling such an environment at any institution (Locke, 2007).

With these views in mind, I propose a dynamic decision-making process to be followed at the management level. I recommend that EUL administrators consider the following prescriptions to help the university achieve its primary goal of better governance and improved education outcomes. Based on the analysis presented above, the success and ultimate effectiveness of the QA processes in achieving ‘quality’ at the institutional level can only be realized if the following steps are implemented:

- A more dynamic managerial governance process, establishing the involvement of academics—including lecturers, teaching assistants, and research assistants—from each department, alongside the various administrators currently involved in such processes. This will lend increased visibility and a greater voice to a wider variety of perspectives, views, concerns, and goals.
- The increased participation of academics at the decision-making level and in

implementing specific practices will increase academics feelings of ownership of QA policies, and encourage them to embrace the QA process. The successful application of the prescribed measures will thus follow as a natural outcome.

- The administration must create and foster a sense of good will between themselves and the university's academics. The academics deserve to play a role in the decision-making process, rather than having the QA requirements imposed on them and their teaching styles from above. This sense of good will can only be achieved by creating a communicative and cooperative institutional environment.
- The university should be aware of the fact that a QA board consisting solely of Deans and other administrators is of limited value, as it lacks the different and varied voices and views contained within the wider academic community.

I am confident in the advisability of adopting the above prescriptions, as they would have no negative impact on costs for the EUL. However, the requirements and wishes set out above will only be successful if backed by a strong political commitment in accepting the need to reduce the bureaucracy currently typifying decision-making processes and managerial issues.

## **6.7. Implications of QA processes in HE**

This section considers the implications of QA processes in the broader educational context of HE in North Cyprus. In the light of my findings and personal experiences, the obvious constraints motivated me to structure the following proposals and prescriptions to address three distinct levels:

### *International level*

- International organisations should play an active role in the establishment of QA policy, for instance by advising on the transferability of existing QA policies from external contexts or in assisting with the adaptation of existing QA policy models.
- International organisations should assess the QA policy prior to implementation; at

present, the North Cyprus QA policy suffers from weak oversight, which exists only at the workshop level, and at conferences meant to provide general information.

- Funding sources need to be identified and developed; for example, professional development, the exchange of academic staff with other universities, both in North Cyprus and abroad, and the conduction of workshops should all be considered.
- Opportunities for North Cyprus academics and educational administrators to gain expertise in QA should be offered; the current lack of expertise inhibits North Cypriot HEIs from following these recommendations, and is a recognized challenge in Turkish HE (Billing & Thomas, 2000a; 2000b).

#### *National level*

- The implementation of QA processes should be accepted as national policy, first by YÖDAK and then by the individual HEIs operating in North Cyprus.
- Implementation, oversight, and management of QA policies and practices should be an ongoing process, with a committee established and bearing active responsibilities, holding regular meetings on relevant topics and concerns, producing written documents detailing their discussions and findings, and conducting or sponsoring research at HEIs.
- A QA unit should be established at each HEI in North Cyprus. This unit should be organisationally independent and autonomous, while still being under the supervision of YÖDAK.
- National QA bodies should have authority over and governance of QA policy while being required to maintain interaction and sharing between HEIs in North Cyprus; policies and best practices should be shared, and the development and implementation of action plans based on these practices can be a common initiative.
- A sense of unity in the implementation of QA initiatives should be fostered. This underscores the need for standardised criteria and structures, to be implemented at the institutional level for all North Cyprus HEIs.
- Funding should be provided for HEIs to create and maintain an auditing mechanism to ensure accountability and objective evaluation of QA policies as enacted.



- An independent QA body for external review is vital. Adalı (2009) has raised the need for such a body in discussing the challenges facing the accreditation of e-learning in North Cyprus HE. An independent accreditation and review body should be established in North Cyprus, as is stipulated by the Bologna Process (Adalı, 2009).

### *Organisational level*

#### *Administrative*

- The participation of academic staff and students in the QA committee should be strongly encouraged, in order to ensure the presence of a variety of voices at the decision-making level.
- The decision-making process should be more cooperative and communicative in nature.
- Quality assurance should be self-critical and reflective (Harvey, 2009).
- The QA policies as implemented should be subject to continuous evaluation, with rigorous comparisons made for the improvement of both administrative and academic services. Monitoring and steering mechanisms providing quantifiable measures including enrolment levels, student to educator ratios, and contextual and qualitative information should be employed regularly.

#### *Academic*

- University education should prepare students for professional life. As such, curricula should eschew memorisation in lieu of the development of critical thinking skills and subject-specific bodies of knowledge.
- University education is about developing thinking individuals, capable of contributing to the wider community (Watty, 2006:300).
- The ideal of life-long learning should be promoted, thereby empowering students to become increasingly independent and autonomous (Watty, 2006:300).
- Technological resources and facilities impact teaching and learning outcomes, and

efforts should be made to ensure the sufficient provision of such resources.

## **6.8. Reflections and implications for future research**

Some of the reasons behind the lack of engagement in both the decision-making and implementation phases of the QA process on the part of academics have been highlighted. Additional research might enhance our understanding of these issues and their potential to serve as either barriers or enablers to the ability of academics to contribute at the administrative level and in decision-making processes. The findings of this study are directly applicable to other HEIs in North Cyprus. The application of these findings could be pursued as a partnership between HEIs, under the umbrella of YÖDAK, as QA has become an increasingly topical issue among North Cyprus HEIs.

This study has produced critical comments and bravely-expressed views with regard to QA processes, and brought a number of unexpected views and experiences about the managerial preoccupations with QA issues at EUL to light. I will provide a brief overview of the findings reported in this thesis. The major theme of this research was the lack of regard given to the views of academics in QA in general (Anderson, 2006; Watty, 2000; 2002). Previous studies have provided accounts of the impacts of this lack of engagement, but few of them provided accounts of the lack of involvement of academics and the interplay between academics and managers specific to the implementation of new QA processes. The findings of this study could be extended going forward, as my research has highlighted the need for additional research into:

- The implementation gap between QA processes and practices, comparing the different views of the QA processes held by stakeholders and academics.
- The impacts of experience, particularly those of academics having held administrative posts, on academics perceptions of the QA process.
- National and organisational initiatives and the impacts of QA processes and their implementation at HEIs.
- How best to promote a QA culture in HEIs.

- How gender influences the QA process and professional practices more generally.
- The role of the cultural context in decision making, and particularly as it pertains to the implementation of QA in HE.

I am confident that this study can also form the basis for further research on the implications of what constitutes 'quality' and 'quality assurance', particularly given the political and economic concerns associated with HE provision.

## References

- Adalı, T. (2009). Accreditation in e-learning: North Cyprus higher education case. *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*. Vol. 1, 2077-2080.
- Ala-Vähälä T. & Sarinnee, T. (2009). Building European level quality assurance structures: Views from within ENQA. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 15, No. 2, 89-103.
- Altbach, P.G. & Teichler, U. (2001). Internationalization and exchanges in a globalized university. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. Vol. 5, No. 1, 5-25.
- Amaral, A. (2007). Higher education and quality assessment. The many rationales for quality. In *Embedding quality culture in higher education. A selection of papers from the 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance*. Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Helsinki. EUA – European University Association. Available at: [www.ktu.lt/lt/mokslas/zurnalai/ekovad/14/1822-6515-2009-1069.pdf](http://www.ktu.lt/lt/mokslas/zurnalai/ekovad/14/1822-6515-2009-1069.pdf) (Accessed on 24 September 2010).
- Anderson, G. (2006). Assuring quality / resisting quality assurance: Academics' responses to 'quality' in some Australian universities. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 12, No. 2, 162-173.
- Arslan, K. and Güven, H. (2007). *Universities in North Cyprus and the Right to Education*. Paper presented at the 38th International Congress of Asian and North African Studies, (ICANAC). 10-15 September, 2007, Ankara, Turkey.
- Ball, S.J. (1993a). What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse*. Vol. 13, No. 2, 10-17.
- Ball, S.J. (1993b). Education policy, power relations and teachers' work. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. Vol. 41, No. 2, 106-121.
- Ball, S.J. (1998a). Introduction: International perspectives on education policy. *Comparative Education*. Vol. 34, No. 2, 117.
- Ball, S.J. (1998b). Big policies / small world: An introduction to international perspectives in education policy. *Comparative Education*. Vol. 34, No. 2, 119-130.

- Becker, S. and Bryman, A. (Eds.) (2004). *Understanding Research for Social Policy and Practice*. Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.
- Billing, D. (2004). International comparisons and trends in external quality assurance of higher education: Commonality or diversity. *Higher Education*. Vol. 47, 113-137.
- Billing, D. & Thomas, H. (2000a). The international transferability of quality assessment systems for higher education: The Turkish experience. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 6, No.1, 31-40.
- Billing, D. & Thomas, H. (2000b). Evaluating a Transnational University Quality Assessment Project in Turkey. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. Volume 4, No. 2, 55-68.
- Blackmore, J. & Lauder, H. (2005). Researching policy. In Somekh, B. and Lewin, C. (eds.), *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. London: Sage Publication.
- BolonyaSüreciSınıftaKaldı ABHaber.com Brussels (2007). Available at: [www.Haber.com/haber.php?id=1983](http://www.Haber.com/haber.php?id=1983). (Accessed in April 2011).
- Borahan, N.G. & Ziarati, R. (2002). Developing quality criteria for application in the higher education sector in Turkey. *Total Quality Management*. Vol. 13, No. 7, 20-38.
- Botas, P.C.P. (2008). Students' perceptions of quality teaching in the UK: The MA in Education case. *Higher Education Review*. Vol. 40, No. 3, 51-69.
- Brennan, J. and Shah, T. (2000). Quality assessment and institutional change: Experiences from 14 countries. *Higher Education*. Vol. 40, 331-349.
- Brown, R. (2000). The new UK quality framework. *Higher Education Quarterly*. Vol. 54, No.4, 323-342.
- Bryman, A. & Hardy, A. (2009). *A Handbook of Data Analysis*. London: Sage Publication.
- Campbell, C. & van der Wende (2000). *International Initiatives and Trends in Quality Assurance for European Higher Education*. Exploratory Trend report. The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Helsinki. Finland.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, L. (2005). *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 2nd edition. London: Sage.
- Dale, R. D. (1999). Specifying globalisation effects on national policy: A focus on the mechanisms. *Journal of Educational Policy*. Vol. 14, No. 1, 1-17.

- Dale, R. D. (2005). Globalisation, knowledge economy and comparative education. *Comparative Education*. Vol. 41, No. 2, 117–149.
- Denscombe, M. (2005). *The Good Research Guide for Small-Scale Social Research Projects*. England: Open University Press.
- Dill, D.D. (2000). Designing academic audit: Lessons learned in Europe and Asia. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 6, No. 3, 187-207.
- Dunne, M., Pryor, J. & Yates, P. (2005). *Becoming a Researcher*. England: Open University Press.
- Eraut, M. (2000). Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. Vol. 70, 113-136.
- Eraut, M. (2004). Informal learning in the workplace. *Studies in Continuing Education*. Vol. 26, No. 2, 247-274.
- Flick, U. (2006). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. 3rd edition. London: Sage.
- Foucault, M. (1980). Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, by Michel Foucault. 1972-1977 (C. Gordon, ed.). New York: Pantheon. 78-108.
- Gosling, D. & D'Andrea, V.M. (2001). Quality development: A new concept for higher education. *Quality Higher Education*. Vol. 7, No. 1, 7-17.
- Green, A. (1999). Education and globalization in Europe and East Asia: Convergent and divergent trends. *Journal of Education Policy*. Vol. 14, No. 1, 55-71.
- Harvey, L. (2004). War of the worlds: Who wins in the battle for quality supremacy? *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 10, No. 1, 65-71.
- Harvey, L. (2006). Impact of quality assurance: Overview of a discussion between representatives of external quality assurance agencies. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 12, No. 3, 287-290.
- Harvey, L. (2009). A critical analysis of quality culture. Paper presented at the INQAAHE Conference, *New Approaches to Quality Assurance in the Changing World of Higher Education*, 30 March – 2 April 2009, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Available at: <http://www.caa.ae/conference/DesktopModules/presentations.aspx>

(Accessed 5 July 2010).

- Harvey, L. (2010). *Deconstructing Quality Culture*. Available at: <http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com>. (Accessed 2 July 2010).
- Harvey, L. & Newton, J. (2004). Transforming quality evaluation. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 149-165.
- HEFCE (2006). Review of the quality assurance framework: Phase two outcomes. Higher Education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Vol. 27, No. 14.
- HEFCE (2006). Review of the quality assurance framework: Phase two outcomes. Higher Education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Vol. 27, No. 14.
- Henkel, M. (2007). Can academic autonomy survive in the knowledge society? A perspective from Britain. *Higher Education & Development*. Vol. 12, No.1, 87-99.
- Hergüner, G. & Reeves, N.B.R. (2000). Going against the national cultural grain: A longitudinal case study of organizational culture change in Turkish higher education. *Total Quality Management*. Vol. 11, No. 1, 45-56.
- Higher Education and Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council (2010). Available at: <http://www.ncyodak.eu>.
- Hill, M.L. (2006). Representin(g): Negotiating multiple roles and identities in the field and behind the desk. *Qualitative Inquiry*. Vol. 12, No. 5, 926-949.
- Hobday, G. (2000). Assessing quality in higher education. *Report on Twelfth International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education*. Melbourne, 28-30 June.
- Hodson, P.J. & Thomas, H.G.(2003). Quality assurance in higher education: Fit for the new millennium or simply year 2000 complaint? *Higher Education*. Vol. 45, 375-387.
- Hoecth, A. (2006). Quality assurance in UK higher education: Issues of trust, control, professional autonomy and accountability. *Higher Education*. Vol. 51, 541-563.
- Katircioğlu. S. T. (2010). International tourism, higher education and economic growth: The case of North Cyprus. *The World Economy*. Vol.33, No. 12, 1955-1972.
- Knight, J. (2001). Monitoring the quality and progress of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. Vol. 5, No. 3, 228-243.
- Knight, J. (2002). *GATS – Higher Education Implications, Opinions and Questions*. First Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education: “Globalization and Higher Education”. Available at

- <http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad/index.shtml> (Accessed February 2008)
- Knight, P.T. & Trowler, P.R. (2000). Department-level cultures and the improvement of learning and teaching. *Studies in Higher Education*. Vol. 25, No. 1, 69-82.
- Kohler, J. (2009). *Quality in European Higher Education*. Paper prepared at the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness, 21-24 May 2009, Bucharest, Romania. (Accessed 9 January 2011).
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.
- Lemaitre, M.J. (2002). Quality as politics. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 8, No. 1, 29-37.
- Lim, D. (2001). *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A study of developing countries*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Lindlof, T.R. & Taylor, B.C. (2002). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*. 2nd edition. London: Sage.
- Locke, W. (2007). Higher education mergers: Integrating organizational cultures and developing appropriate management styles. *Higher Education Quarterly*. Vol. 61, No.1, 83-102.
- Mason, J. (2005). *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd edition. London: Sage Publications.
- McInnis, C. (2000). Changing academic work roles: The everyday realities challenging quality in teaching. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 6, No. 2, 143-185.
- Mızıkcı, F. (2003). Quality systems and accreditation in higher education: An overview of Turkish higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 9, No. 1, 95-106.
- Mızıkcı, F. (2005). Prospects of European integration: Turkish higher education. *Higher Education in Europe*. Vol. 30, No. 1, 67-79.
- Morley, L. (2001a). Producing new workers: Quality, equality and employability in higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 7, No. 2, 131-138.
- Morley, L. (2001b). Subjected to review: Engendering quality and power in higher education. *Journal of Education Policy*. Vol. 16, No. 5, 465-478.
- Morley, L. (2003a). *Quality and Power in Higher Education*. Maidenhead: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.



- Morley, L. (2003b). Reconstructing students as consumers: Power and assimilation? In Slowey, M. and Watson, D. (eds.) *Higher Education and the Lifecourse*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Morley, L. (2007). The X factor: Employability, elitism and equity in graduate recruitment. *21<sup>st</sup> Century Society*. Vol. 2, No. 2, 191-207.
- Morley, L. & Aynsley, S. (2007). Employers, quality and standards in higher education: Shared values and vocabularies or elitism and inequalities? *Higher Education Quarterly*. Vol. 61, No. 3, 229-249.
- Morley, L. and Rassool, N. (2000). School effectiveness: New managerialism, quality and the Japanization of education. *Journal of Educational Policy*. Vol. 15, No. 2, 169-183.
- Morse, J.A. (2006). The INQAAHE guidelines of Good Practice for External Quality Assurance Agencies: Assessment and next steps. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 12, No. 3, 243-253.
- Newton, J. (2000). Feeding the beast or improving quality? Academics' perceptions of quality assurance and quality monitoring. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 6, No. 2, 153-163.
- Newton, J. (2002). Views from below: Academics coping with quality. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 8, No. 1, 39-61.
- Newton, J. (2007). What is quality? In *Embedding quality culture in higher education. A selection of papers from the 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance*. Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Helsinki. EUA – European University Association, 2007. Available at: [www.ktu.lt/lt/mokslas/zurnalai/ekovad/14/1822-6515-2009-1069.pdf](http://www.ktu.lt/lt/mokslas/zurnalai/ekovad/14/1822-6515-2009-1069.pdf) (Accessed 24 September 2010).
- Ozga, J. (2000). Policy Research in Educational Settings: Contested terrain. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Panayiotopoulos, P. (1999). The emergent post-colonial state in Cyprus. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*. Vol. 37, No. 1, 31-55.

- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 3rd edition. London: Sage Publication.
- Peters, M. (2006) Higher education, development and the learning economy. *Policy Futures in Education*. Vol. 4, No. 3, 279-291.
- Punch, K. (2006). *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. 2nd edition. London: Sage.
- Randall, J. (2002). Quality assurance: Meeting the needs of the user. *Higher Education Quarterly*. Vol. 56, No. 2, 188-203.
- Ratcliff, J.L. (2003). Dynamics and communicative aspects of quality assurance. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 9, No. 2, 117-131.
- Robertson, S.L. (2005). Re-imagining and rescripting the future of education: Global knowledge economy discourses and the challenge to education systems. *Comparative Education*. Vol. 41, No. 2, 151-170.
- Sadler, D.R. (2005). Interpretations of criteria-based assessment and grading in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. Vol. 30, No. 2, 175-194.
- Sadler, D.R. (2009a). Indeterminacy in the use of preset criteria for assessment grading. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. Vol. 34, No. 2, 159-179.
- Sadler, D.R. (2009b). *Moderation, grading and calibration*. Paper presented at Good Practice in Assessment Symposium, 24 November, Griffith University. (Accessed 11 February 2011).
- Schostak, J. (2006). *Interviewing and Representation in Qualitative Research*. England: Open University Press.
- Seto, M. & Wells, P.J. (eds.) (2007). Quality Assurance and Accreditation: A glossary of basic terms and definitions. UNESCO-CEPES.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research*. 2nd edition. London: Sage.
- Srivastava, P (2006). Reconciling multiple researcher positionalities and languages in international research. *Research in Comparative and International Education*. Vol. 1, No. 3, 210-222.
- State and Planning and Organisation (SPO) (2010), *Economic and Social Indicators* (North Cyprus: Follow Up and Coordination Department, Prime Ministry, Nicosia), Available at: <http://www.devplan.org>.

- The European University of Lefke (2006), Available at: <http://www.eul.edu.tr>
- Teichler, M. (2004). The changing debate on internationalisation of higher education. *Higher Education*. Vol. 48, 5-26.
- Temple, B. & Billing, D. (2003). Higher education quality assurance organisations in Central and Eastern Europe. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 9, No. 3, 243-258.
- Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. Higher Education Act. 94/1 of September 2005.
- UNESCO (1998) World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action. (Paris, UNESCO). Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration\\_eng.htm](http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_eng.htm) (Accessed 28 November 2006)
- Usher, R. (1996). A critique of the neglected epistemological assumptions of educational research. In Scot, D. and Usher, R. (eds.), *Understanding Educational Research*. London: Routledge.
- van der Wende, M.C. & Weterheijden, D.F. (2001). International aspects of quality assurance with a special focus on European higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 7, No. 3, 233-245.
- Vidovich, L. & Porter, P. (1999). Quality policy in Australian higher education of the 1990s: University perspectives. *Journal of Education Policy*. Vol. 14, No. 6, 567-586.
- Watty, K. (2002). *Quality in Higher Education: The missing academic perspective*. Available at: <http://aair.au/jir/2002Papers/Watty>. (Accessed 25 June 2010).
- Watty, K. (2003). When will academics learn about quality? *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 9, No. 3, 213-221.
- Watty, K. (2006). Want to know about quality in higher education? Ask an academic. *Quality in Higher Education*. Vol. 12, No. 3, 291-301.
- Williams, M. (2002). Ed. Tim May. (2002). *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage.
- Yorke, M. (2000). Developing a quality culture in higher education. *Tertiary Education and Management*. Vol. 6, No. 1, 19-36.

## Appendix I: Faculties and Departments in European University of Lefke

Faculty	Departments
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (FEAS)	Business administration, Economics, banking and finance, Computer information systems, International relations Public administration.
Faculty of Architecture and Engineering (FAE)	Computer engineering, Civil engineering, Architecture, Electrical & electronic engineering. Interior architecture
Faculty of Communication Sciences (FCS)	Journalism; Public relations and advertising; Radio, TV and cinema; Visual communication design.
Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS)	English language teaching, Turkish language and literature, History.
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Technologies (FAST)	Horticulture and marketing, Agribusiness and management. LandscapeArchitecture

**Appendix II: Original interview schedule**

1. Could you briefly describe what the term 'quality assurance' in higher education means to you?
2. If you think about 'new quality assurance processes', what are the features of the quality assurance processes and their influences on your professional practice?
3. What are your views on quality assurance procedures introduced at the European University of Lefke since 2006, and how do they relate to your teaching and learning practices?
4. If you think of the institution where you work in, what are the factors, facilitating the implementation of the quality assurance processes?
5. What are the challenges to implementing the quality assurance processes; what are the factors which make it difficult?

### **Appendix III: Interview schedule after piloting**

1. Could you briefly describe what the term 'quality assurance' in higher education means to you?
2. In your view, what do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of quality assurance in higher education?
3. If you think about 'new quality assurance processes', what are the features of the quality assurance processes and their influences on your professional practice?
4. What are your views on quality assurance procedures introduced at the European University of Lefke since 2006, and how do they relate to your teaching and learning practices?
5. If you think of the institution where you work, what are the factors facilitating the implementation of the quality assurance processes?
6. What are the challenges to implementing quality assurance processes? What are the factors which make it difficult?
7. What do you see as the priorities in terms of quality assurance at the moment, as it relates to teaching, learning and management?
8. If you think of your professional practice, how do these quality assurance processes influence your teaching? Can you give me some specific examples?

## Appendix IV: International QA Agencies in North Cyprus

<b>Date and Meeting Type</b>	<b>Presenter and Organisation</b>	<b>Location and Subject</b>
18 January 2010 Seminar	Dr. Per Westman Swedish National Agency	Near East University <i>“E-learning and Aspects of Quality in Europe”</i> <i>“European Standards and Quality Assurance System in Higher Education”</i>
16 March 2010 Contact Meeting	Prof.Dr. Stephen Watson Association to Advance Collegiate School Of Business	Girne American University <i>“Accreditation”</i>
17 March 2010 Meeting	Prof.Dr. Maria Helena Nazare, Vice Director European Universities Association	Near East University <i>“Terms and Processes Concerning Institutional Evaluation Programmes of the European University Association”</i>
2 April 2010 Visits	Lars Nielson, Director EURASHE	Girne American University Near East University Cyprus International University Eastern Mediterranean University
8 April 2010 Meeting	George Eubachs, Dr. Keith Williams European Association of Distance Teaching Universities	Eastern Mediterranean University <i>“Minimum Requirements for E-Learning Programmes”</i>
25 May 2010 Conference	Peter Williams QAA/ ENQA	European University of Lefke <i>“European Quality Assurance Standards”</i>
26 May 2010 Conference	Peter Williams QAA/ ENQA	YÖDAK <i>“Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education”</i>
27 September 2010 Seminar	Jana Mohren, Director ASSIN Programme Coordinator EUR-ACE	Eastern Mediterranean University <i>“Engineering Education in Europe and Worldwide”</i> <i>“Accreditation and standards and procedures- ASSIN”</i>
8-9 November 2010 Seminar	Dr. David Gloser Royal Institute of British Architects Prof.Dr. Abdel Galil Prof.Dr. Zeno Bogdanescu Dr.SelahatinOnur	International Cyprus University <i>“Accreditation process of RIBA”</i>

Obtained from the Higher Education and Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council (2010). Available at: <http://www.ncyodak.eu>.

## **Appendix V: Quality Assurance followed in FAE**

### **Faculty of Architecture and Engineering**

Establishing quality relies on satisfactorily fulfilling the following factors:

#### **a) Mission and Vision:**

The opening of new departments must be within the norms of the vision and mission of the University.

#### **b) Objectives and learning outcome:**

The learning outcome of a course is an important parameter in quality assurance. A team of experts, comprised of both academics and industrialists, will formulate the expected learning outcome of each course in the curriculum.

#### **c) Curriculum design:**

Curriculum should be carefully designed to meet the mission and vision of the department, faculty and University, and should take proper and full account of the involved objectives and learning outcomes.

#### **d) Staff Potential:**

Careful selection of staff is an essential requirement to establishing a culture of quality. The staff should be industrious and show initiative in order to facilitate effective knowledge transfer.

#### **e) Academic infrastructure, and the required number of qualified staff and laboratory:**



At least one staff member should be made available in each area of specialization. Staff positions covering all areas of specializations should be filled. Laboratories, with modern equipment, should be present and available in the University's chosen areas of specialization.

**f) Support staff:**

A specific, required number of Research Assistants must be employed by the University in order to comply with both EE and COMP guidelines. Research Assistants offer practical help in knowledge transfer, enable lab classes to be conducted more efficiently and effectively, and help to ensure that research projects can be carried out in an effective manner.

**g) Active Participation in research projects and publications:**

Each staff must be involved in at least one project, and publish at least one paper per academic year. Research outcomes are implemented in classrooms if they satisfy the learning outcome.

**h) Periodic Assessment of learning outcomes:**

Each course must be assessed by the relevant faculty at the conclusion of each semester. A team, proposed by the department, can prepare the assessment in consultation with the full staff, by referring to course outlines, and to mid-term and final examination questions. Different cross-sections of students could and should be trialled as part of the assessment.

**i) High level utilization of laboratory facilities:**

- At least one Laboratory Engineer must be able to effectively oversee the functioning of EE labs, and one Laboratory Engineer must effectively oversee the COMP labs. If needed, the Engineer should be deputed for short-term intensive training courses.

- One technician should be available at the EE lab on a full-time basis, for maintenance and service needs of equipment.
- Lab manuals should be properly prepared, with experiments both potentially drawn from catalogues and included in course outlines and syllabi. The course instructor and department faculty must finalize the lab manual in department meetings prior to each semester.
- Lab handouts for each experiment are to be provided to students beforehand, and should be kept in the lab for reference.
- In each laboratory, the experiments employed for each lab class, of all courses using that laboratory, should be presented in a fixed manner, such as by a poster.
- A model report of the results of each experiment should be created and maintained in the lab as a reference material.
- To assess the performance of the laboratory for each student, the following values are followed, at present, in several EE laboratories:  
 20% for laboratory exercises.  
 10% for participation, to include attendance, completion of laboratory experiments and submission of laboratory reports.  
 % 40 for mid-term examination.  
 %60 for final examination.

Each experiment and attendant laboratory report should be assessed on the enumerated scale. The assessment is ultimately the responsibility of the Research Assistant in charge of the respective laboratory, and is to be presented no later than the next practical laboratory class. No change can be made to the assessment once it has been officially reported. At the semester's conclusion, assessments should be verified by the Research Assistant in charge of the laboratory, and the overall grade for each student's performance should be assessed at that time.

The mid-term and final examinations for laboratory sections should include additional grades for *viva voce* [oral examinations] conducted in each laboratory section. This should account for no more than 20% of the final examination grade, and topics should be

expected to cover any and all experiments listed on the syllabus and conducted during the semester.

**j) Examination system:**

Questions should aim to assess learning outcomes to as great an extent as is possible for each given course. Faculty and, where practical and necessary, outside experts, should assess and approve model questions. Thesis evaluations should be expected to involve external examiners.

**k) Running graduate programmes as support for and in conjunction with undergraduate programmes:**

Running graduate programmes reinforces and strengthens the undergraduate programs in the same discipline. Doing so also enables Research Assistants to qualify themselves for eventual inclusion in teaching faculty.

**l) Periodic monitoring of activities:**

Monitoring of activities should be accomplished via regular departmental and faculty meetings. Such meetings should occur during the first (departmental, including support and administrative staffs) and second (faculty) weeks of the month, respectively.

**m) Periodic special lectures:**

Firms and organizations such as TURKCELL, TELSİM, Chamber of EE, Microsoft, etc., can be invited to present on recent developments. The third Thursday of each month can be fixed for this purpose. A program of such talks can be prepared in advance of the semester. Such a program will lend support to the University's STAJ activities.

**n) Industrial visits:**

Industrial visits to relevant manufacturing and assembly locations can be fixed to occur on the fourth Thursday of each month during the semester. A program of such visits can be prepared in advance of the semester. Such a program would enhance students' practical knowledge.

**o) Updating of the curriculum:**

The curriculum is to be updated consistently, keeping in mind evolving ABET, YOK, PEC and MUDEK requirements. Best programs, with chosen courses satisfying such requirements, should be developed. ABET-granted curricula, for instance in EMU and METU, can be used as references for this purpose.

**p) Faculty-departmental staff website collaboration:**

Collaborative efforts between faculty and general departmental staff, to produce departmental and course-specific websites, must be done in order to ensure that all required information pertaining to a given course is properly and thoroughly disseminated to the student population.

**q) Effective quality assurance simplifies accreditation efforts:**

Accreditation efforts should be continued, with MUDEK and ABET pursued for selected departments only said department has attained PEC accreditation.

**r) Performance evaluation of academic staff:**

Evaluations are to be performed at the end of each academic year, and are to be conducted at multiple levels, including:

Student evaluations

Department evaluations

Faculty evaluations

Faculties and faculty members performing at a consistently high level should be appropriately rewarded and encouraged by the University. Assessment of the performance levels should account for the faculty's ability to meet expected learning outcomes, the enrolment levels of students in the respective department, the job placement status for fully matriculated students and feedback from employers.

### **Summary:**

The primary considerations in achieving standards in quality assurance include:

1. Updating the curriculum on no more than a tri-annual basis, to account for contemporary issues, developments and technological advancements.
2. Tight adherence to posted schedules. Lectures should be planned ahead of the start of the semester, and scheduled topics should clearly meet the course objectives and help students toward the expected learning outcome.
3. Foster strong industrial relationships. The concerns of the relevant industries, and the leading private companies within those industries, should be invited to participate in updating the curricula and, where necessary, reorienting the learning outcome. They should also be invited to participate in STAJ and graduation projects, and faculty and departmental staff should work to develop employment placement opportunities for students.
4. Assess the learning outcome as objectively as possible. Following each semester, academic staff should seek to fine-tune the learning outcomes for different student sub-groups.
5. Strengthen and increase the occurrence of both the periodic Special Lectures delivered on emerging and relevant topics and the industrial visits.
6. Exploit laboratory facilities for education and research to the fullest extent possible, including the most robust skill development for Research Assistants as is possible in any given setting.

## **Appendix VI: Quality Assurance Evaluations and Proposals**

Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences

### **I. Opening new departments**

a) The following Master's programs are to be launched as soon as possible.

- International Economics and Finance
- An associate professor will be given the responsibility of coordinating the preparation of a curriculum for the program, in collaboration with the departmental faculty and instructors.
- An interdisciplinary Master's program will be prepared jointly with the Faculty of Communication Sciences, titled, "Integrated Marketing Communication".

b) Three additional undergraduate Departments have been proposed, in addition to the six already existing. These include:

- Human Resource Management, whose tentative curriculum is added to the document.
- International Trade and Management, whose tentative curriculum is added to the document.
- Logistics, whose curriculum is currently in preparation.

All new departments will require additional faculty, including:

- 1 in the field of Human Resource Management and Marketing
- 1 in Law
- 2 in Logistics

Curricula for the six departments of the Faculty were critically reconsidered as recently as two years prior. To update the curricula as needed, proposals are to be solicited for consideration by departmental and faculty staff.

## **II. Curriculum design and Organization:**

All curricula currently in force have been examined and updated as recently as two years prior. Given the need for constant re-evaluation and to foster general discussion, propositions regarding curriculum changes are to be submitted to the Dean's office in accordance with the calendar laid out above, and only after having been subject to thorough departmental evaluation.

## **III. Redesigning Curriculum**

Extensive efforts have been made to elaborate the course outline for each course, and content is expected to be in line with the BOLOGNE criteria and in accordance with the imperatives of accreditation procedures. The importance of course outlines, as documents identifying the course's aims, elaborating the subjects to be taught according to the above mentioned objectives and fitting the course to the prevailing academic calendar, should be emphasized and attempt to cover all courses offered. For this purpose, a template laying out essential points to be integrated into a given outline should be examined, with additions and alterations made on an as needed basis. Such a template can be found in (Annex 1).

- a. The connection between proposed learning outcomes and the content of exams is to be given thorough consideration. Effort must be made to assess how the expected outcomes enumerated in course outlines are achieved or not achieved. Department heads are to direct teaching faculty in this regard, and are expected to offer support on an as needed basis. Under supervision by the office of the Dean, precautions are to be taken to avoid such amendments and alterations as are suggested resultant to the assessment process from hindering student performance in the interim.
- b. Prior to the beginning of the academic year, all courses offered by the Department should be published, according to their contents, in a manner which creates a

synthesised understanding of the expected learning outcomes of the Department's curriculum. Information should be organized so that the totality of knowledge accumulation, including skills and concepts shared between multiple courses, are highlighted in a manner which ensures an integrated objective. Preventing unnecessary repetitions and overlap and ensuring the realization of integrated learning outcomes will result from such efforts.

- c. Both orientating and encouraging regulations are required to mitigate students' habit of late registration. The creation of a favourable environment, in which existing rules are clearly and concisely disseminated to the student body, can be accomplished effectively through the organization of regular meetings with students, to be conducted prior to the start of a given academic year and/or semester. Such meetings will allow for face-to-face interaction between students and academic staff, fostering dialogue while allowing faculty a forum in which the Department's values, rules and expected learning outcomes can be highlighted.

Relatedly, organizing a social gathering for graduating and outgoing students, allowing the communication of their assessments in an informal setting, will have an important and positive net effect on defining and fine-tuning future policies.

- d. The teaching staff has an undeniable place and an active role in helping the students pass their time at our University with maximum gain, obtain knowledge accumulation and become expedient and constructive members of the society. Some of the precautions that we undertake must be considered only and only within this framework.
- e. It is necessary to continue practices aimed at preventing students from cheating. It is essential that faculty notify a student suspected of cheating during an examination of their awareness by demanding surrender and, if surrender is not granted, by collecting the examination materials and initiating appropriate disciplinary actions. A lecturer ignoring this requirement or otherwise allowing



students to achieve grades unearned by performance and ability does a student no good.

- One factor potentially contributing to cheating is a lack of English language capability on the part of students. Evaluations show that incoming students will benefit from previous education at an English Preparatory School specialized to transfer information essential to the education they will receive in each department in the Faculty.
- Departmental staff should undertake explanatory visits to the relevant English Preparatory School. During such visits, they should define the primary discourses regarding the related departments. Adding academic English instruction to the curricula of all second year students will increase the effectiveness of all other course outlines and offerings.
- Academic English courses should be designed in a manner that enhances the acquisition of knowledge related to the field of interest by combining grammar instruction with and vocabulary improvement.
- Given a focus on vocabulary improvement, it will be up to the individual Department's as to whether or not to allow the use of dictionaries during examinations. While faculty can choose to sustain a shared dictionary in each examination room, faculty and examination proctors should be willing to provide definitions to unknown or unfamiliar words by writing them on the board and announcing the definition to all students when asked. This stipulation should apply if and only if the term is not vocabulary considered to be necessary knowledge as part of the course's terminology.

f. The development of a student evaluation form assessing a course lecturer is of paramount importance in generating data and feedback to be used in assessing faculty performance. Improvement of the evaluation form can be carried out in stages. To achieve the most effective and instructive arrangement possible, the form should include sections allowing students to express their points of view and opinions and to offer abstract suggestions, in addition to the contributions expected of direct answers to standard evaluation questions. A commission tasked with

implementing this idea should be appointed as soon as is possible.

#### **IV. Institutional facilities and support**

It is necessary to regularly gather faculty and departmental staff to facilitate a greater degree of interoperability for the rules and regulations as enacted. Given the size of the current staff, the matters addressed in coordination with and under the guidance of the Dean of the Faculty should be unhindered, due to the functionality of the departmental and general University staff. In order to address deficiencies in this matter, tangible steps should be taken to increase the incidence of opportunities for the direct exchange and evaluation of ideas related to the department and its future-oriented policies.

#### **V. Research development and innovation**

Suggestions and proposals for the organizing of academic colloquiums—including conferences and symposia—to be held in subsequent semesters should be solicited from both for the faculty and departmental staff. The degree of participation of student clubs, their active participation in the academic organizations organized and administered by faculty, would benefit were all departments to concentrate their efforts on contributing to an ever greater degree in this venue. The submission of an annual project engagement proposal to the Dean's office, accompanied by a precise schedule of planned activities and the extension of an invitation for a guest lecturer would be a positive practice. The Dean of Faculty will be well positioned to solicit additional support from the University's Rector's for such activities, with the caveat that University support would be possible only if the proposed activity were well prepared, clearly scheduled, and pertinent to the associated course. The creation of a "Committee on Academic Activities" within the faculty would serve to assure the sustainability of such efforts, and to promote better coordination among and within departments.

## **VI. Learning outcomes**

The necessity of prerequisite courses in our programs is currently under consideration. Such measures would be logical if the goals are to improve the quality of our course offerings, and to facilitate the reaching of our goals as they pertain to “learning outcomes”. The disadvantages of block scheduling (having three hours of class in a row) are clearly understood. The desirability of alternatives, such as a “2+1” model, should be seriously considered.

## **VII. Attendance Policy**

Attendance control is mandated by University regulations (EUL Associate and Undergraduate Education and Examination Regulation article number 19). Absenteeism is currently a serious issue among students, as it creates an unnecessary obstruction to the education process. We have observed that students prefer to reside in Turkey for extended periods, which contributing to the University’s highly negative image abroad. Habitual absences also carry serious consequences for students, particularly as it pertains to high-enrolment classes. Students should not be allowed to form the impression that absences carry no consequences. A proposed attendance form has been attached to this document; its widespread use would ease the checking of attendance, and it has been designed so as to be usable by all faculty members.